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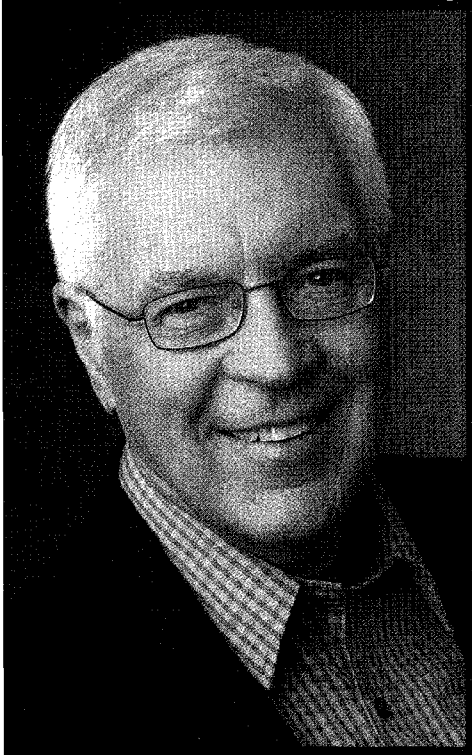

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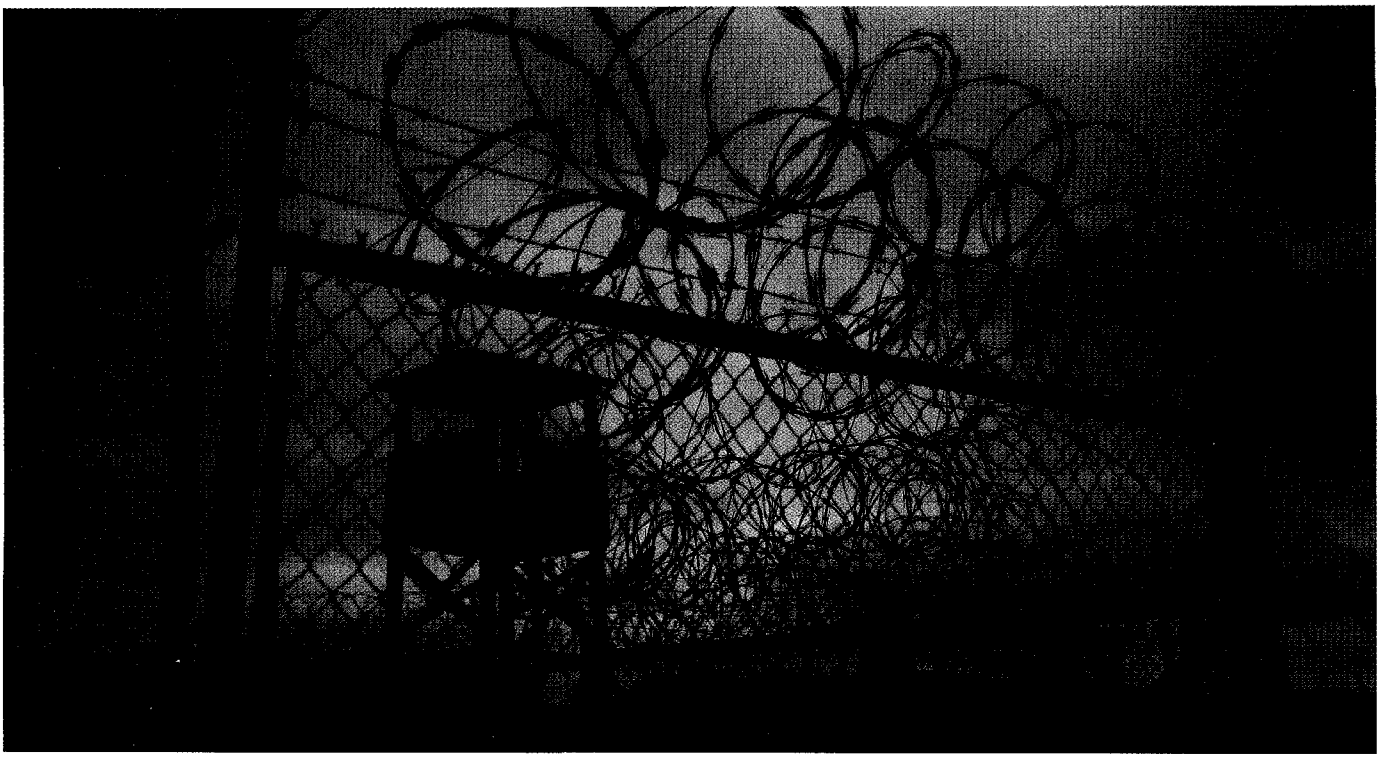

NO MORE

THE U.S. MUST END ITS POLICY ON TORTURE

Introduction 16
Bob Barr 18
Rand Beers 20
Peter Bergen 20
Jimmy Carter 22
Steve Cheney 22
Amy Chua 24
Richard Cizik 25
Wesley K. Clark 25
Jack Cloonan 26
Chris Dodd 27
Kenneth M. Duberstein & Richard Armitage 29
Eric Fair 29
Carl Ford 30
Lee F. Gunn 30
Chuck Hagel 31
Lee H. Hamilton & Thomas H. Kean 32
Gary Hart 32
John Hutson 33
Claudia Kennedy 34
John Kerry 36
Harold Hongju Koh 37
Carl Levin 39
Richard Lugar 39
Leon E. Panetta 40
Nancy Pelosi 40
William J. Perry 41
Paul R. Pillar 41
Tim Roemer 41
John Shattuck 43
Anne-Marie Slaughter 44
Theodore C. Sorensen 44
William H. Taft IV 45
Thomas G. Wenski 45
Lawrence B. Wilkerson 46
Stephen N. Xenakis 47

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On this page: Chip Somodevilla/Staff/Getty Images

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DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Note: A Perfect Storm for Political Reform 3

Letters 5

Tilting at Windmills 6
Correcting Obama … Fire on the flight deck is the least of your concerns … The Golden Rule 2.0
by Charles Peters

TEN MILES SQUARE

The Absent Professor 12
Why politicians don't listen to political scientists
by John Balz

The *Monthly* Interview: Gore Vidal 14

ON POLITICAL BOOKS

The Roots of W. 49
How the president inherited his truculence and recklessness from the Walker side of his family
by Jacob Heilbrunn

The Wiseguy 52
A repellent street-level GOP operative's surprisingly entertaining memoir
by Joshua Green

Talladega Rights 55
The selling of NASCAR
by Jamie Malanowski

Downfall 58
E. J. Dionne says that the era of the religious right is finally over.
by Steven Waldman

Ascension 61
Amy Sullivan says that the era of the religious left has begun.
by Paul Baumann

The Right Attitude 64
Over time, the neocons' ideology has morphed. But their temperament has remained fixed.
by Kevin Drum

Tar Heel Pioneer 67
Name any Republican strategy of the past thirty years; chances are Jesse Helms got there first.
by Ed Kilgore

But Can You Get a Decent Bagel There? 70
The anxiety of choosing a city to live in
by Doron Taussig

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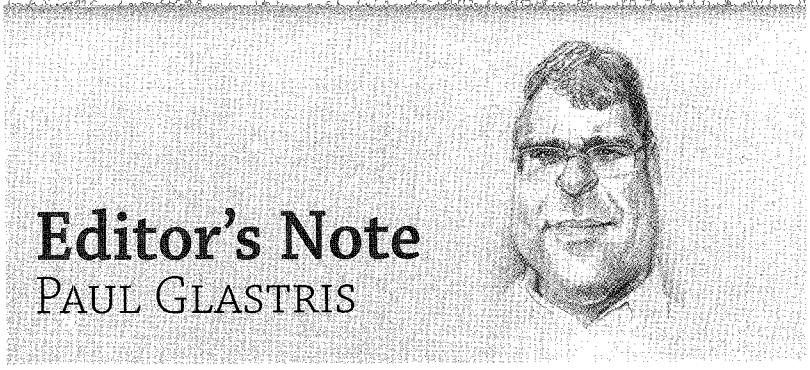

A Perfect Storm for Political Reform

How John McCain, a man widely disliked by many in his own party, became the presumptive Republican presidential nominee is still a bit of a mystery to me. His reputation for heroism in Vietnam certainly helped. So too did his advocacy of the surge. That he faced no conservative competitor who could unify the base was surely a major factor. And Republicans do traditionally nominate the candidate who is "next in line." (McCain came in second in the 2000 primaries.)

Regardless of how it happened, the fact is that the GOP has done something unusual and potentially important: it has placed a reformer at the top of its ticket. McCain's most famous legislative accomplishment, one movement conservatives have never forgiven him for, is the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, otherwise known as the McCain-Feingold law, which banned soft-money contributions to political parties. He also spearheaded investigations of the connections between corrupt lobbyist Jack Abramoff and bigwigs in his own party. He has long railed against congressional abuse of earmarks, infuriating colleagues on both sides of the aisle. And in one of the central fronts in the war over presidential power, the use of torture, McCain sided with the rule of law and the Constitution, not the Bush White House.

The reason this is such a big deal is that Republicans almost never nominate reformers for president. The last time they did so was in 1928, and even then, the candidate they chose, Herbert Hoover, was known mostly for noncontroversial government efficiency-type measures. You have to go all the way back to the trust-busting Teddy Roosevelt to find a GOP candidate willing to break some political china in the name of reform.

Democrats have been more prone to choose process-reform-minded candidates (think McGovern, Carter, and Dukakis). This year, both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama fit that mold, though to different degrees. Both promise to put a lid on no-bid contracting. Both favor public financing of congressional campaigns, the holy grail of campaign finance reformers. Hillary has the more fleshed-out position on reforming the voting process (paper records of every vote, etc.). But she has not put reform of Washington at the center of her rhetoric the way Obama has done. Obama also has the stronger reform record, having co-authored a major overhaul of lobbying rules and a law mandating that all federal grants and contracts be listed in easily searchable Internet databases.

Still, regardless of who wins the Democratic primary, the 2008 general election will feature two reasonably committed political reformers. Such a thing hasn't happened since 1912, when Teddy Roosevelt mounted a third-party challenge to the GOP incumbent William Howard Taft and handed the election to the progressive Democrat Woodrow Wilson. The conditions are right, in other words, for a perfect storm for political reform. We could have a campaign in which the candidates try to one-up each other with ambitious proposals to make the machinery of American democracy more open, effective, and equal, with the winner carrying a mandate for change into the White House.

But just because the potential is there doesn't mean it will happen. Political consultants have long argued that political process issues don't move voters, and the candidates right now seem to be following that advice. Obama is giving inspiring speeches about changing the ways of Washington, but he seldom talks specifics. The proposals he has put forth, and that you'll find on his Web site, are of the worthy-but-not-transformational variety (an independent watchdog to investigate congressional ethics charges; national broadband town hall meetings for cabinet secretaries). McCain, worried about securing his base, is barely even talking about reform, and instead of offering new reform ideas, he is defending himself against charges that he is too close to lobbyists. He is backsliding in other areas as well. Most alarmingly, as we note in this month's cover package (see "No More," page 16), McCain has gone from leading the charge against "enhanced interrogations" to voting to protect the CIA's ability to conduct them.

If we want to get a virtuous bidding war started between the candidates, we're going to need auctioneers. That would be members of the press. Normally, political reporters don't feel comfortable challenging candidates to propose reform ideas that go beyond what another candidate has offered—to do so seems too much like advocacy. But this year could be different. The public's disgust with the current rules in Washington has reached new heights. Also, reform is the logical extension of many of the big issues that candidates are already talking about: the influence of lobbyists, excess partisanship, and

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the abuse of presidential power, to name three. And the fact that the candidates have themselves claimed to be reformers gives journalists a chance to do what they like best: ask "Gotcha" questions.

Indeed, one can imagine a whole debate this summer devoted to the topic of reform. The questions practically write themselves:

"Senator, you've harshly criticized excessive congressional earmarks. But presidents also include thousands of earmarks in obscure budgetary documents they send to Capitol Hill. As president, will you pledge to cut the number of presidential earmarks and make those you do offer easily accessible to the public?"

"Senator, you've bemoaned the bitter partisanship in Washington. But as you know, that partisanship is partly fueled by the way state parties carve up congressional districts to make them ideologically homogenous. This protects members from being challenged, and gives them little incentive to break from their party or reach out to moderate or independent voters. If you really care about restoring bipartisanship, would you support legislation by Reps. Zoe Lofgren and John Tanner that would mandate the creation of independent commissions to draw congressional districts without regard to politics?"

"Senator, many critics have accused President Bush of using signing statements as an extraconstitutional means to avoid executing laws that Congress writes but the president disagrees with. You have criticized the president for this practice. But would you support legislation by Senator Arlen Specter that would prohibit courts from using signing statements to interpret whether laws are being faithfully carried out?"

"Senator, President Bush has refused to allow current and former White House aides such as Harriet Miers and Joshua Bolten to testify before Congress regarding their knowledge of the U.S. attorney firing scandal, even though Congress has subpoenaed them to appear. Do you believe this is an appropriate application of the president's executive privilege powers, and if not, where would you draw the line?"

"Senator, the Federal Communications Commission has traditionally restricted the number of media outlets any one company can own in a single community in order to preserve a multiplicity of voices. Under the current administration, the FCC has repeatedly relaxed those rules. Do you agree with the FCC's policies, and to what extent should one company be allowed to control the media outlets in a single community?"

"Senator, do you think that representatives of the District of Columbia should have the right to vote in the House of Representatives, and if so, would you demand that Congress send you legislation granting such voting rights to the District?"

Wolf, Tim, Chris—take it away! WM

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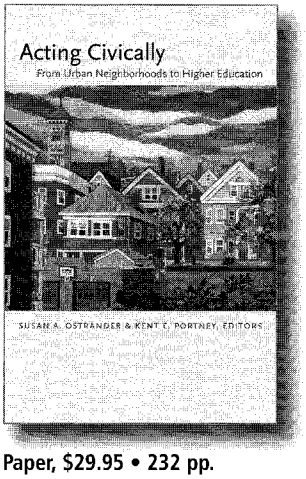

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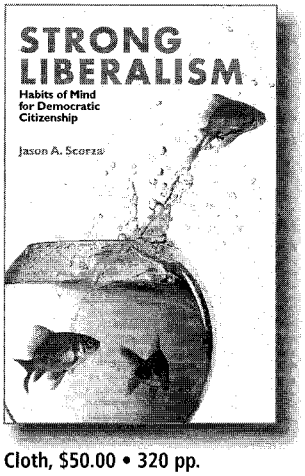

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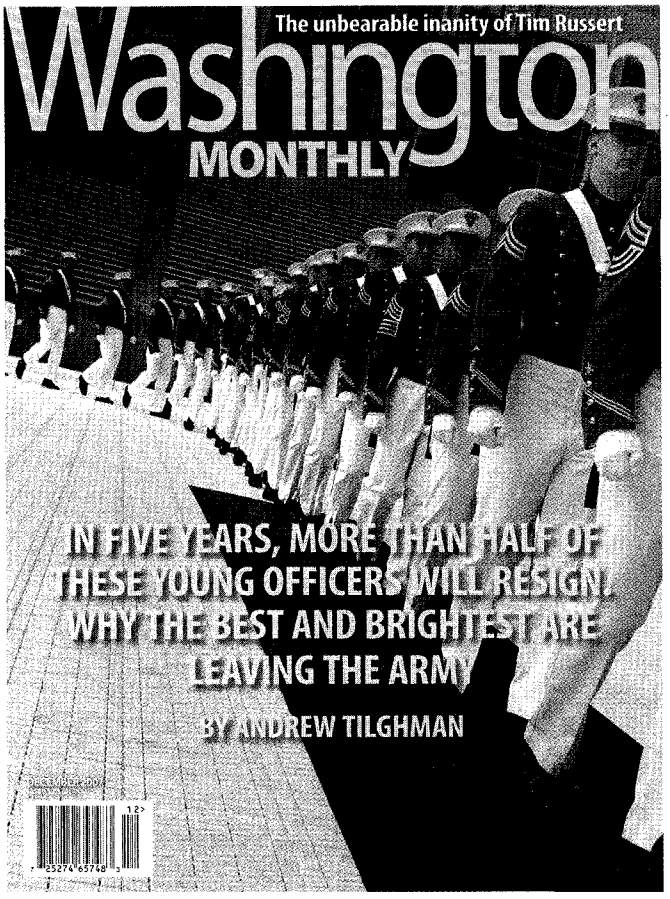

A losing battle

My son and daughter-in-law are both honor graduates from West Point's "9-11 class" of 2005. When they read "The Army's Other Crisis" (Andrew Tilghman, December 2007) my son's response was, "This article pretty much explains the situation with my wife, me, and all of our friends from West Point."

They told me that talent, drive, and intelligence are cultivated at West Point but go to waste in the Army, thanks to red tape and outdated modes of operation and management. But when I asked my son and his wife about changing the Army, his response was, "It is hopeless: by the time you get high enough up the ladder, you learn that you don't rock the boat if you want to advance." Talent that the Army and our country desperately needs is going to waste.

Name withheld
Via e-mail

Beat the Press

Matthew Yglesias nailed it ("The Inalienable Inanity of Tim Russert," December 2007).

I watched Tim Russert's interview with Hillary Clinton last Sunday and was astounded that NBC has let this guy be the host of *Meet the Press* for all these years. His use of snippets and out-of-context video clips was not only unfair, but also failed to deliver any meaningful information.

Steve Nordseth
Mesquite, Texas

Obama abroad

Ted Widmer's entire essay is based on the narrowest definition that I have ever seen of what made JFK JFK. ("Ask Not!," online, January 2008). A resume checklist would have been less myopic, since Widmer's argument is limited to the "Foreign Travel" section.

Your readers, by contrast, may be interested in the parallels between how these two presidential candidates inspired youth toward civic participation and what this says about the times they were campaigning in. Your readers might want to understand the extent to which both candidates articulated a fresh vision for the nation. The lines of potential comparison are numerous, but Mr. Widmer has forgone them all for a blow-by-blow comparison of passport stamps.

Even with that narrow analysis, his conclusions aren't remotely compelling. Having lived abroad for an extended period of time, I can testify that the wisdom gleaned from international experiences doesn't come from a wide-but-shallow sample of different countries. Instead, perspective comes from prolonged exposure to another culture and from the experience of viewing our country from the outside. Like Kennedy, Obama has clearly done that, and it has imbued him with a greater sense of America's place in the world than the other candidates.

So is Obama John Kennedy? I can't say myself, but I doubt Caroline Kennedy believes so. Rather, she seems to believe that this man's candidacy has inspired her children the same way her father's candidacy inspired and challenged a generation and a nation forty years ago. The story is larger than Obama, larger even than today's youthful Americans. It is a story that says, after all we've experienced and done, we can still believe in hopes and dreams. That was JFK's legacy for his daughter, and she honors it today.

Dan Hunt
New York

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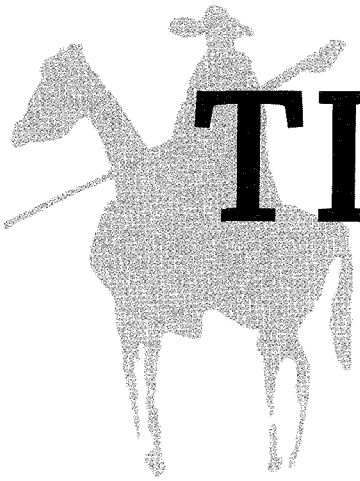

TILTING *at windmills*

By Charles Peters

The more the merrier

It is a sad fact of Washington life that members of Congress, however ungifted they may seem in other respects, are geniuses in finding ways to evade ethics rules. Consider the new ethics law passed this year. It provides that lobbyists cannot pay for parties for a member of Congress during a national convention. These parties have become a favorite way for lobbyists to court legislators.

Here's how the Ethics Committee has decided to interpret the new law. Parties for one member are prohibited, but parties for several members are still just dandy.

> However ungifted they may seem in other respects, members of Congress are geniuses in finding ways to evade ethics rules.

Remember Iraq?

Recent polls have shown the war in Iraq has dropped to third or fourth or fifth in the concerns of the American people, with the economy now in first place. I hope that by the time this magazine appears, Democrats will be reminding voters that the war has crippled our ability to meet economic problems at home. Ending it will free hundreds of billions of dollars to stimulate the economy.

Filibusted

The filibuster has become a major factor in the gridlock that has come close to paralyzing Congress in recent years. It explains why Democrats keep saying they need sixty votes. What many people don't know is that the threat was rarely employed before the Senate changed its rules in 1975 to permit cloture with three-fifths of the votes instead of two-thirds.

Before the rule change, resort to filibusters usually only happened when a minority felt its most vital interests were at stake, most often when southerners were faced with a civil rights bill.

When the three-fifths rule was adopted, it was considered a great blow to tyranny by a minority. An unfortunate, unintended consequence has been that minorities have come to think they are freer to use the dreaded filibuster. This trend has culminated in the Senate Republicans using the threat to stop any legislation they don't like.

Lame duck guts

The new National Intelligence Estimate stating that Iran stopped trying to develop a nuclear weapon in 2003 has been hailed as a sign of a newly courageous intelligence community in articles in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. I hope the articles are right, but I have this word of caution: Bureaucrats always become more courageous in the final months of a presidency. The politicians who would have cracked down on them have left, are leaving soon, or are preoccupied with sending out their resumes and looking for their next job. The bureaucrat is free to speak out. Unfortunately, that doesn't guarantee that he will also speak out when a new administration comes with the power to determine the bureaucrat's future for four or eight years.

Where Grandma's money goes

I had previously voiced my concern that the AARP, which began its life as a tool of one insurance company, has come full circle and is now in bed with another, UnitedHealth. If you assume that company is devoted to the interests of AARP members, consider the case of William W. McGuire, UnitedHealth's chief executive until very recently. He has been found guilty of backdating stock options by the SEC. Investigators discovered a curious coincidence between the dates on the options and the dates the stock value was low. The result, of course, was that the value of the options was much greater than what it would have been had McGuire not fiddled with the dates.

What should be interesting to AARP members is the value of the options. Those that McGuire has been forced to surrender totaled $620 million. He has been allowed to keep options worth $800 million. How much could those amounts, not

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to mention the money involved with the backdated options that were awarded to other executives, have reduced the cost of the premiums paid by AARP members?

We'll let you know in fifteen years if your pacemaker is safe

Many of us have been shocked by the misleading ads for prescription drugs that seem to appear every ten minutes on our television screens. The latest example is the Lipitor ad featuring an endorsement of the drug by Dr. Robert Jarvik, who is not only not a cardiologist—he is not even licensed to practice medicine, much less prescribe drugs.

One reason for the misleading ads is that the FDA does not have the power to review them in advance. Only after the ads appear can the agency punish the advertisers who deceive. But even then, it reviews only 35 percent of drug advertising, according to Francesca Lunzer Kritz, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Why so few? Because the FDA is absurdly understaffed. Indeed, according to a Government Accountability Office report summarized by Gardiner Harris of the *New York Times*: "The FDA is so understaffed ... [it] will need at least twenty-seven years to inspect every medical device plant that exports to the United States, thirteen years to inspect any foreign drug plant, and 1,900 years to inspect every foreign food plant."

Cautioning Congress I

The reason regulatory agencies like the FDA are understaffed is that right-wingers who cannot succeed in abolishing them emasculate these agencies with niggardly budgets. Another example of this problem that has recently become prominent is the Consumer Product Safety Commission, where enough scandals have occurred to attract major attention from the press, and thereby inspired legislation that will give it more staff. My only concern is that the new employees will be hired by Nancy Nord, a Bush appointee who has been unrelentingly hostile to regulation. Wouldn't it be better to give hiring power to the next head of the agency who will assume the office in January?

Cautioning Congress II

This reminds me of an important warning I have for Congress. Do not—I repeat, do not—confirm a Bush appointee to replace David Walker, the head of the Government Accountability Office who recently resigned. The GAO plays a crucial role as a watchdog for government agencies. The job has an unusual tenure of fifteen years.

Correcting Obama

One troubling fact about the two leading Democratic candidates is that neither has run any organization larger than their Senate staff. Some enterprising reporter should investigate how well they carried out even these modest executive responsibilities, for a president does have to manage the government, despite Barack Obama's notion that the job of the president is not to "go in and run some bureaucracy." Indeed, his attitude betrays a troubling ignorance.

Franklin Roosevelt thought his managerial responsibilities so important that he established the agency now known as the OMB to be his eyes and ears, overseeing the operations of the federal government. He was also famous for enlisting friends and associates, most notably his wife, Eleanor, to go around the country to see how New Deal programs were actually working. He even used Eleanor's lesbian lover, Lorena Hickok, a veteran journalist, to report on the effectiveness of the WPA.

During the 1952 election, Harry Truman was fond of noting that Dwight Eisenhower would be in for a shock if he ever got elected, because he would expect running the government to be like running the Army.

"He'll sit here," Truman would say, according to Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power*, "and he'll say, 'Do this!' 'Do that!' And *nothing will happen*. Poor Ike—it won't be a bit like the Army. He'll find it very frustrating."

Truman's prediction proved to be right about Ike and the civilian bureaucracy. On the other hand, Ike's intimate knowledge of the defense establishment meant that he stands out among the presidents who have followed him in his ability to detect the BS in Pentagon budget requests.

Correcting Hillary I

One line of Hillary Clinton's that most of the media has swallowed hook, line, and sinker is that she has "been working to bring about positive change for thirty-five years." The exception is Matt Stearns of the McClatchy newspapers, who points out that she "spent fifteen of those 35 years at one of Arkansas's most prestigious corporate law firms, where she represented big companies and served on corporate boards."

Correcting Hillary II

Speaking of Hillary, do you remember the movie *Primary Colors*, in which the character modeled on her, upon learning that her husband's opponent had possibly used cocaine twenty years earlier, immediately ordered a staff member to confirm the dirt so that it could be used against him? I recalled this episode when I realized that there had been at least three occasions when Obama's admitted adolescent cocaine use had been brought up by Clinton's surrogates. All three were close associates of the Clintons—William Shaheen, Robert Johnson, and Mark Penn, her leading strategist. If you think Hillary Clinton was not involved, you must still believe that Bill Clinton "did not have sexual relations with that woman."

> Media heavyweights today make so much money that they have lost touch with the reality lived by most Americans.

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A racket in retreat

Among the many billing problems that encourage mischief, two show signs of reform. One involves lawyers, the other political consultants. For lawyers, it's billable hours; with consultants, it's percentage billing.

The billable hour requires lawyers to break down their day into time segments, often as short as fifteen minutes, and assign each segment to work for a specific client. The practice tempts lawyers to lie about the time or work too hard. In many cases, they do both. The result is inflated bills to the client and exhausted lawyers. The good news is that the clients are waking up, with the dash of cold water sometimes coming in the form of a bill for more than twenty-four hours of work in the same day from the same lawyer. The result, according to *Slate*'s Lisa Lerer, is that clients are insisting on negotiating flat fees.

> Warning to Congress: Do not—I repeat, do not—confirm a Bush appointee as head of the Government Accountability Office.

As for political consultants, the racket involved taking a percentage of the "buy," the major element of which is usually television time. This tempts the consultant to play Iago, constantly whispering into the client's ear that more television commercials in New York or Los Angeles or wherever will guarantee victory at the polls. This billing system cost the 2004 Kerry campaign $9 million, paid to just five consultants, led by Robert Shrum.

But this year, according to the *New York Times*, the top Democratic candidates have joined the Republicans in negotiating flat fees or placing a cap on the amount the consultant can charge. The fact that Clinton consultant Mark Penn took away $3.8 million for January alone suggests that reform still has a way to go.

See no nukes, hear no nukes

Israel's nuclear weapons are never mentioned by our government, and only rarely discussed by the media, so I welcomed Lew Butler's recent op-ed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "It's Time to Talk About Israel's Nukes, and Ours Too." Iran knows that Israel has nuclear weapons—Butler estimates two hundred or so. Although I'm definitely not eager for Iran to acquire nukes, it seems understandable for Iranians to ask, Why shouldn't we have them too? Our concern about nukes seems to apply only to our enemies and not to our friends. This is bound to make us seem hypocritical to the rest of the world.

Butler also asked how we can keep 5,700 active weapons and 4,000 "in reserve" when we insist that other nations reduce or eliminate theirs.

Imperfect prophet

My prediction in the December issue that the Republican right wing would keep John McCain from getting the party's nomination turns out to have been dead wrong. It reminds me of another time our prophetic powers failed us. In 1979 we published a cover article that proclaimed that the next years would bring a New Idealism to America. Instead, we got the explosion of greed of the 1980s that continues to this day.

One unfortunate result of that explosion is that it drew many of our best and brightest to Wall Street, where they have devoted themselves to schemes to make themselves rich that far too often have turned out to be elaborate shell games that now threaten to cause economic catastrophe.

But we should be grateful for how one group of the best and brightest chose to make money. It was the entrepreneurs who gave us the giant technological advances that have occurred during the same period that their fleece-the-sucker contemporaries flourished on Wall Street. Indeed, one can say that Wall Street represents what has gone wrong since 1980, while Silicon Valley represents our ability to make good by making something useful.

Tax attacks

One consequence of the real estate boom that ended last year was escalating assessments. The boom has clearly passed, but many of the higher assessments remain on the books, meaning more trouble for homeowners who find themselves paying higher taxes for real estate that has lost much of its value. An example of how taxes have increased, for which I'm indebted to Mike Smith of the Associated Press, is what has happened to Maurice Gunyon of Indianapolis. In 2005, his property tax was $2,900. Last year it was $4,600. This year it is $7,500. Gunyon is retired and doesn't know how he is going to pay.

Small mercy

Some states have already bowed to pressure from homeowners to reduce their property taxes. Unfortunately, this also means reduced revenues, which in turn means reduced services to the public.

In one state, however, it looks like reduced services will have at least one salutary effect. California plans to release 22,000 nonviolent inmates from its prisons.

I've long thought that the primary purpose of prisons should be to protect the rest of us from the violent. Probation is the best solution for most first-time nonviolent offenders, and short sentences are usually enough to punish the rest of the nonviolent who live each day in prison in terror of the violent.

Media myopia

During the Democratic debate at St. Anselm College, Charles Gibson, the moderator, expressed his concerns at proposals by Barack Obama and John Edwards to raise the cap on payroll taxes on income above $100,000. Won't that hurt you St. Anselm professors who are married and whose combined income is more

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than $200,000? asked Gibson. The professors in the audience laughed. Obviously, not a lot of them made $100,000. Gibson, hearing the laughter, suggested that many New York City schoolteachers made more than $100,000. Again, he was wrong, which illustrates one of my favorite points, which is that media heavyweights make so much money that they have lost touch with the reality lived by most Americans—80 percent of whom not only make less than $100,000, they make less than $80,000.

Another example of this ignorance is the drumbeat for relief of the alternative minimum tax, which largely affects those making more than $100,000, from the editorial pages of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, which led to the quick passage of a bill giving relief even though it contained no corresponding revenue from other sources to make up what is lost by the bill.

> One troubling fact about the two leading Democratic candidates is that neither has run any organization larger than their Senate staff.

Nervous about NASA

I worry that NASA is again trying to move too fast, scheduling six shuttle launches this year, according to the *Washington Post*'s Marc Kaufman, twice the number of flights it has managed in each of the last two years. This reminds me of the pressure from NASA executives to launch the first shuttle against the early warnings from this magazine's Gregg Easterbrook of defects, including the danger that the booster rocket would blow up. That is, of course, what happened to the *Challenger* one cold morning after Thiokol engineers had spent the night desperately warning NASA executives that the booster's O-rings would contract from the cold, resulting in escaping gas that would cause the rocket to explode. NASA executives ignored the warning, because, one has to suspect, they wanted Ronald Reagan to laud the flight in his State of the Union address that night.

Fire on the flight deck is the least of your concerns

Another thing that inspires worry about NASA's current leadership is the way they have handled a survey of commercial and general aviation pilots about safety concerns. When the Associated Press first asked NASA to release the report, they refused, saying that "publication might affect the public's confidence in airlines," a statement that did not tend to inspire confidence in either the airlines or NASA. Demand grew for the report's release. NASA finally published it. The only problem is that it has more redactions than even Dick Cheney's office would dare attempt. But the redacted report contains just enough evidence of pilot fatigue, even a "pilot asleep on the flight deck," "incidents of engine failure," and "fires aboard," to make you very curious about the redactions. Former NTSB chairman Jim Hall nailed NASA in this comment to the *Washington Post*: "When a government agency is not transparent to the American people, particularly of issues of safety, they are not fulfilling their responsibilities and earning their pay."

The Golden Rule 2.0

The Golden Rule is for me and many others the most sublime expression of the Christian faith. I have to admit, however, that it does not always apply in a literal sense. George Bernard Shaw identified one problem when he wrote, "Do not do unto others as you would have them do unto you; their tastes may be different." I've found another approach in the funeral program of my old friend Richard Graham. Some of his sayings were printed on the program. Among them was this: "You shouldn't do unto others what you wouldn't want done to you." This one struck me as absolutely foolproof.

Get well soon

Another old friend, Dr. Ronald Glasser, recently underwent a hip operation, followed by a stay in the hospital limited to two days by his insurance company. This led him to reflect on what has gone wrong with the practice of medicine in recent years:

"Ten years ago, the standard admission for a hip replacement was a seven- to ten-day affair with inpatient physical therapy twice a day throughout the admission. But it isn't just hips. In the early 1990s, if you had a gall bladder removed you stayed in the hospital eight days. Now, if you have your gall bladder removed at eight in the morning, you are sent home at noon. Ten years ago, open-heart surgery meant a minimum of ten days in the hospital; now, if you have a mitral or aortic valve replaced, you are sent home on day four. If you have breast cancer and a mastectomy to be followed by outpatient chemotherapy and radiation, you are home within eighteen hours of the mastectomy, drains and all. If you have a radical prostectomy for prostate cancer, you are home on day three with a bladder catheter in place and instructions for your wife or daughter on how to handle the indwelling catheter and how to clean the urine bag so you don't develop a bladder infection. Have a laminectomy on Tuesday for a slipped disc and you are home Thursday. Forget about being able to bend to pick up something from the floor, and forget about being able to turn over in bed. While I and my hip, and apparently everyone else, weren't looking or paying attention, patient care in America had undergone a profound change.

"The facts about early discharges are quite stunning. The average length of stay following admissions to a hospital are not only less than a quarter of what they were ten years ago; they are also on average four to six days less per surgical procedure in America than in Canada, Germany, or France.

"By the end of the 1990s, hospital administrators began to decrease their length-of-stay policies to cover decreased payments as well as lure more health plan patients. No one said a word. After all, everyone—

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health plans, hospitals, physicians, and surgeons—were now in the exact same payment boat, but they could all do well if they all went along. The only ones left out of the mix were the patients.

"An internist recently admitted a patient in his early sixties with an unsteady gait and a few falls at home to the hospital in order to monitor his heart rhythms. After eighteen hours the hospital's ward coordinator reminded him that the patient had not shown any dizziness since admission and the monitor had not indicated a significant conduction defect, and so the patient should be sent home. The internist felt he had no choice. On the way out of the hospital, the patient developed a ventricular tachycardia. He was saved. Another five minutes and he'd most likely have died in the car taking him home. That could have been any one of us who are no longer twenty or thirty years old.

"Physicians and surgeons have to stand up and fight for what is right, and that means what is best for the patient. But that is a bit problematical. There is business involved. It simply doesn't pay for the office manager or the clinic administrator to have the doctor follow a patient after the patient is finished with the procedure, operated on, or discharged after an admission to the hospital.

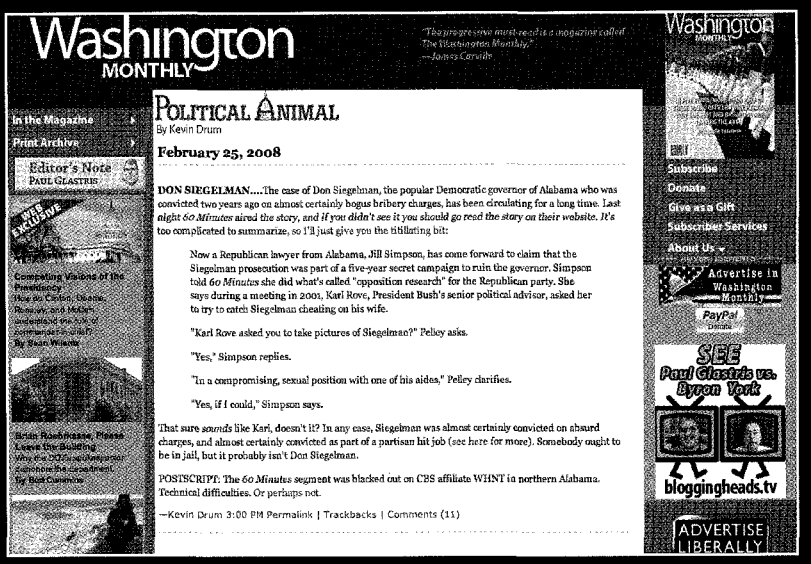
"Like the family doctor in an office over the drugstore, the old idea of one physician as being in charge or being the quarterback running the whole show is over."

Sure, but before I sign, let me consult my publicist

If you have any doubt that celebrityism now dominates our culture, ponder this.

When the popular TV show *COPS* runs film of a perpetrator being arrested, it protects itself from legal trouble by getting the alleged criminal to sign a release. "Twenty years ago, it was harder to get releases," the show's producer tells the *Washington Post*'s Peter Carlson. "Now, it's way over 90 percent of people who sign." WM

Charles Peters is the founding editor of the *Washington Monthly*.



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THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

The Absent Professor

Why politicians don't listen to political scientists

By John Balz

Several years before his death in 2003, Harvard political scientist Richard Neustadt offered an accurate, if understated, assessment of how his discipline was regarded in Washington. "The standing of our profession," he told a group of fellow political scientists, "is not high." Indeed not. For decades now, political scientists have bemoaned how little use those who practice politics have for those who study it. Among political professionals—politicians, Capitol Hill staffers, journalists, pollsters, and campaign consultants—economists are prized, but political scientists are spurned. "When you go to talk to policy makers," says Jacob Hacker of Yale University, one of the few political scientists who can start a sentence in that way, "if there is someone else in the room who is a social scientist, 90 percent of the time she is an economist."

The last two political books to generate serious Beltway buzz came from nonpolitical fields. First, there was George Lakoff, a linguist at the University of California at Berkeley, whose book *Moral Politics* gave Democrats an F and Republicans an A for their storytelling abilities. Then this past summer, there was Emory University's Drew Westen, a psychologist, touting the importance of emotion over reason in *The Political Brain*. But what about the release of that three-years-in-the-making report called *Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*, authored by fifteen of political science's finest thinkers? Remember how it warned that America's "ideals of equal citizenship and responsive government may be under growing threat"? Well, perhaps you missed it. So did Washington. As Hacker puts it, the report "fell into the water with a ripple, but not much else."

How did the hapless political scientist fall so low? As a political science graduate student at the University of Chicago, I would certainly like to know myself. Things started off so well in my field. No less an eminence than Woodrow Wilson himself laid out a vision for a discipline in which the study of politics would support and guide government. For many years, that's just what political science did. During the New Deal, Franklin Roosevelt made extensive use of political scientists in his administration. Later, giants of the field such as Harold Lasswell, David Truman, and Gabriel Almond consulted with policy makers about World War II and the cold war. In subsequent decades, the field continued to produce stars such as Neustadt and James Q. Wilson (also of Harvard), men whose identity as political scientists was secondary to their identities as public intellectuals.

Forty years ago, though, that all began to change. Some policy makers (and journalists) began to complain that political science had become overly quantified, with mathematically inclined practitioners treating politicians like atomic particles instead of human beings. Others criticized political scientists for pursuing irrelevant and obscure research. The field was also derided for increasingly inaccessible jargon. Washington didn't care for this rarefied brew, preferring more and more the stiffer drink of campaign consultants and pollsters.

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Although many of these criticisms weren't fair—since economists (like all academics) were likewise guilty of all the sins mentioned above—there's no doubt that economists, unlike political scientists, retained an appreciation for the art of self-promotion. (See Steven Levitt and *Freakonomics* for a prime example.) Political science, meanwhile, forgot how to elbow its way into the conversation and began to make a virtue of its remove. Today, an aspiring political scientist fears Washington's approval almost as much as he or she covets it. "You are constantly aware of these two audiences and you don't want to shoot your academic reputation by saying something dumb in the political arena," explains Harvard's Robert Putnam, a prominent political scientist and the author of the national best seller *Bowling Alone*. "You can have Hillary Clinton know your name and political science think you're a dunce, or have political science know you and have Hillary Clinton never heard of you. Most political scientists would choose the latter."

Once such a mind-set takes hold, it's hard to overcome. The same applies to Washington's view of the situation. Equilibriums are an important concept in social science, and reputations often settle into one of two states: high and low. When they collapse, they languish for years. Washington considers political science unhelpful today because it considered political science unhelpful five years ago.

Because of this, even political scientists who might speak beyond the academy find themselves stymied. Take Princeton's Larry Bartels, an academic whose work probably makes him the closest to a potential Steven Levitt of political science. Bartels communicates easily with those outside his field. He has considerable technical and mathematical skills and still eschews complex equations as a means to derive universal explanations for political behavior. And he has shown an appetite for entertaining debate and dissent, such as when he took on author Thomas Frank for his thesis in the best-selling book *What's the Matter With Kansas?* Despite these points in his favor, Bartels says his contact with Washington political professionals has been "very modest"—an invitation to a White House dinner in 1996, a request from the White House in 2003 for a paper of his about public opinion on tax cuts (with no follow-up), and an appointment by the New Jersey State Supreme Court's chief justice to serve on an apportionment commission in 2001.

Asked what sort of things political professionals could stand to hear from political scientists, Bartels cites a long list of examples of misconceptions that have become conventional wisdom: Americans are polarized. (False: Congress is polarized; the American public is not.) Voter turnout has declined over the past several decades. (False: It hasn't declined since 1972.) Abortion is as hot an issue as ever. (False: It peaked in the 1990s.) Bill Clinton left a profound mark on the Democratic Party. (False: The former president has had almost no effect, good or bad, on the party's "brand name" among most voters.) Karl Rove's ability to mobilize the base in 2004 was unprecedented. (False: Rove mobilized fewer "strong Republicans" in 2000 and 2004 than his predecessors did in 1996.) Working-class voters care a lot about religion in their political choices. (False: Religion matters much more to middle- and upper-class voters than to working-class voters—even if they live in Kansas!) Bartels hasn't shared his thoughts very widely. "For my part," he wrote, "since I'm not going to be on the National Security Council or the Federal Reserve Board, I mostly just go about my academic business."

Still, many political scientists think they're finally experiencing a comeback, one in which campaign consultants have taken the lead. "'Synergy' is too trendy a word, but it's not inaccurate here," says Daron Shaw, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin. "[Consultants] will actually read books by [political scientists] and say, 'That's an interesting idea.'" Shaw, who had lunch with Rove occasionally, joined the Bush team in 1999 as director of election studies and worked as an Austin-based consultant for the Bush reelection effort and the Republican National Committee in 2004. Similarly, when Samuel Popkin at the University of California in San Diego released the book *The Reasoning Voter*, Bill Clinton's campaign in 1992 paid close attention. Several years later, Karl Rove bought thirty copies and told everyone on the George Bush campaign they had to read it. "Rove decided they needed to do scientific studies of get-out-the-vote in 2000 to use in 2002 and 2004," said Popkin. "He took it very seriously."

So far, the politician with the greatest faith in political scientists may be Texas Governor Rick Perry. During his 2006 reelection campaign, Perry turned over control of his travel schedule and $2 million to Shaw and three others to test the added value of the two things that political consultants treasure most: advertisements and campaign appearances. Consultants will want to bury many of the study's results. (Hint: advertising didn't matter much.) However, Shaw was less successful at transferring his brand of experimentation to the White House, where he suggested that President Bush similarly test out the effect of targeted versus arbitrary campaign appearances around the country. "So what you want us to do is completely randomize the president's travel?" Rove asked at one point. "That was the end of that conversation," Shaw recalls.

Overall, though, if we political scientists are going to reach politicians and policy makers, we're not going to be able to rely on consultants or academically inclined politicians, but rather on more traditional channels of Washington discourse: making friends, being relevant, and writing stuff that people can be bothered to read. To that end, some of us are trying out blogging, some are rediscovering the art of the narrative, and some are seeking to train our inner publicity hounds. It's hard to say what works best. "I've spent time talking with presidential candidates before they became candidates," says Putnam, whose list of conversation partners has included Barack Obama, both Clintons, Mike Huckabee, Al Gore, and George W. Bush. "How did they ever hear about me? I don't have a clue." For the sake of my profession, I hope we get one. WM

John Balz is a political science graduate student at the University of Chicago.

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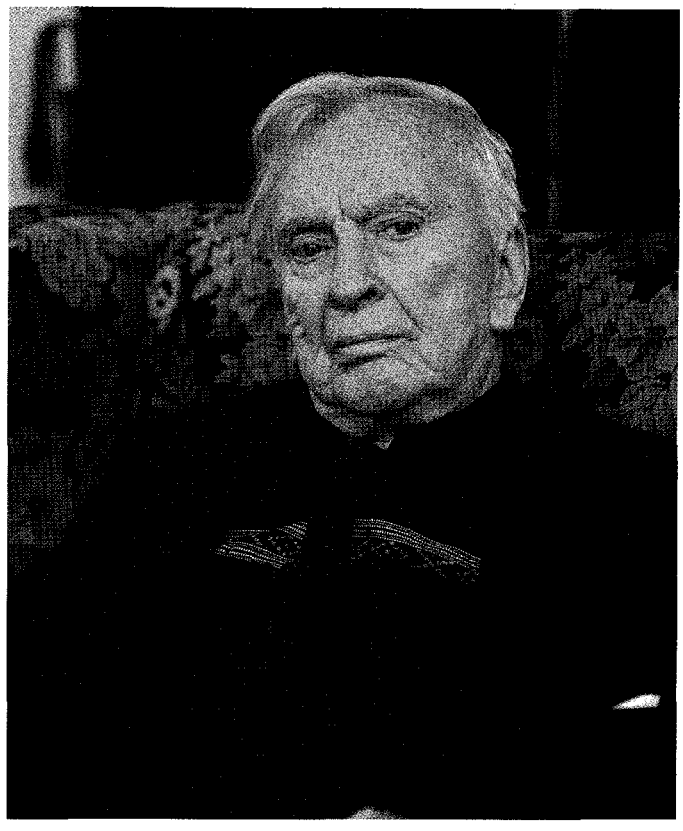
THE *Monthly* INTERVIEW

Gore Vidal

In his six-plus decades as a novelist, essayist, and dramatist, writing from homes in Italy and the United States, Gore Vidal has returned again and again to the subject of American political history and its uncomfortable similarities to imperial Rome. The *Washington Monthly*'s Peter Laufer and Markos Kounalakis recently caught up with the celebrated author, and discussed what lessons America today might learn from Rome, ancient and modern.



Robyn Beck/Staff/AFP/Getty Images

WM: What historical comparisons come to mind to shed light on the state of modern American democracy, current events, and our attitudes toward power? Where is the United States as a nation today?

GV: Well, after the good Emperor Tiberius climbed Palatine Hill and was hailed as Caesar, the Roman Senate proposed giving him a blanket advance endorsement of any legislation or commands he might later propose. And Tiberius sent back a note to the Senate that said: "This is insane. What do you think you're doing? Suppose that one day the emperor has gone mad? Or, suppose the emperor is not really there—and someone has taken his place?" Tiberius thought the worst possible scenario for Rome would be if the entire Senate agreed, in advance, to any policies that might come from the emperor. He vetoed that proposal; he just tore up the message.

WM: How did the Roman Senate react?

GV: The Senate at first sent it right back to him. And Tiberius just groaned. When he was asked, "Have you no message for the Senate?" his response was: "Yes, I do. Tell them how eager they are to be slaves." My point is, today in the United States, there's a lot of president worship. We love authority figures.

WM: What do you think about press coverage of the president and also the presidential race?

GV: The *New York Times* never saw a president they didn't worship—unless he was doing good, and then they could sandbag him. I wish that other newspapers had more mixed ownership and more independent points of view. The *Des Moines Register*, whose coverage of the Iowa caucuses I found to be rather creepy, seems to be largely an opinion sheet for the people who own it.

WM: For many years you lived in Italy. Today it's a country where the media is unabashedly focused on the agendas of its owners. In fact, the owner of one major Italian media company recently became prime minister. Have we ever seen anything like that in the United States?

GV: We nearly got William Randolph Hearst for president, back when he owned just about every major American newspaper. As both press lord and aspiring politician, his ambitions were quite startling. At one point, he got into a quarrel with Theodore Roosevelt over who *really* made history. Needless to say, Hearst was more likely to *invent* history. That makes it easier to leave your mark. WM

Markos Kounalakis, the president of the *Washington Monthly*, and **Peter Laufer**, the magazine's broadcast editor, host the weekly radio program *Washington Monthly on the Radio*, from which this interview was excerpted. The show can be heard on XM Radio station 130, P.O.T.U.S. '08. For a list of other stations or to listen online, visit www.washingtonmonthly.com.

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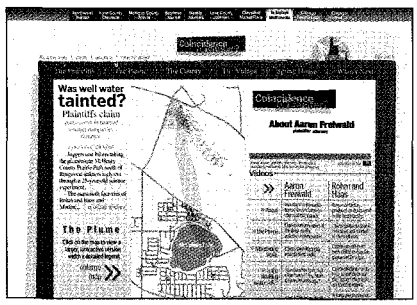


Screenshots from www.nwherald.com

McCullom Lake Series: Coincidence or Cluster, by Kevin Craver and Danielle Guerra, *Northwest Herald*

In May 2006, residents of the Illinois town of McCullom Lake, population 1,074, packed into the village hall. A month before, they'd learned that three townspeople had contracted extremely rare forms of brain cancer and were suing two local chemical companies, alleging that the companies had allowed chemicals to contaminate the drinking water. These plaintiffs weren't alone: several more residents suffering from brain and nerve cancer had also come forward after learning about the lawsuit from the area's newspaper, the *Northwest Herald.*

At the meeting, the county health department assured residents that it had performed a study on the issue and concluded that the seemingly high number of cancer cases was "not statistically significant." While chemicals had leaked from the manufacturing plants, officials said, the plume of contaminated groundwater had not mixed with the town's water supply. As proof, the health department displayed a PowerPoint slide locating the plume clear of the town—with a chemical company's logo in the corner of the image.

For *Herald* reporter Kevin Craver, the Board of Health findings "didn't pass the smell test." He asked his editors if he could spend three months investigating the story, but they weren't sure the *Herald*, with a small staff and a circulation of 40,000, could afford to lose a veteran reporter for that long. Craver continued covering the lawsuit the best he could.

As his stories began appearing, Danielle Guerra followed them closely. A recent college graduate, she'd just joined the paper as the videographer for its new multimedia team. She pushed hard for an in-depth project: "I wanted the community to know that these were real people," she told the *Monthly*.

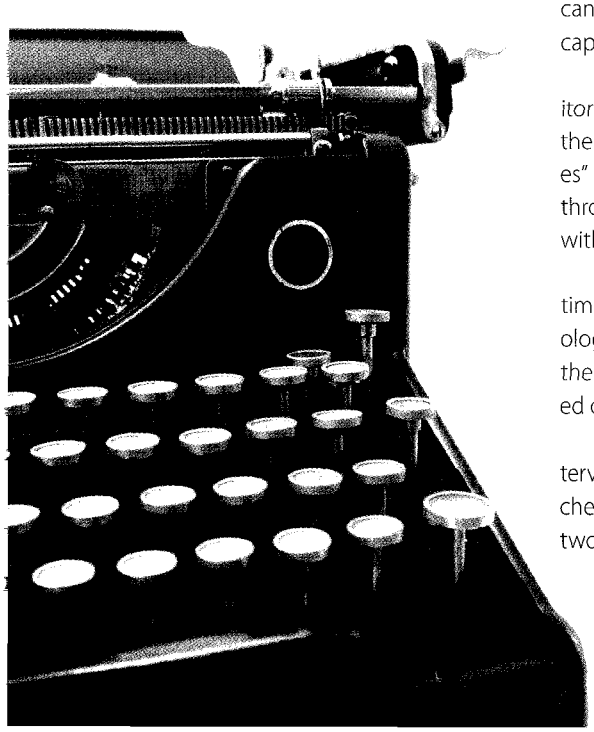
One plaintiff particularly interested Guerra: Johann and Frank Branham had spent most of their lives in McCullom Lake before moving to Arizona. Frank was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2004 and had died two months later. Johann's anguish was something you "couldn't capture on a newspaper page," Guerra said.

In August, Craver and Guerra traveled to Arizona to interview Johann Branham. Their editors found the footage so moving that they launched the most ambitious reporting project the paper had ever undertaken. For several months, Craver pored over "at least 25,000 pages" of legal documents and internal health department communications that he obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. Guerra recorded hundreds of hours of interviews with chemical company executives and the loved ones of cancer victims.

In December 2007, the paper ran a six-part series in the *Herald* accompanied by a multimedia presentation on the paper's Web site. In print, Craver revealed that a novice epidemiologist had botched the health department's study, and that the department had relied on the chemical companies' analyses when it concluded that chemicals had never contaminated drinking water. The county board has since called for another study.

On the Web site, a rich combination of interactive diagrams, photographs, and video interviews brings the town to life. Each side gets a chance to speak; Rohm and Haas, one of the chemical companies, agreed that the *Herald*'s investigation was fair. There are now twenty-two plaintiffs, most of whom learned about the suit from the paper.

One chemical company settled with the plaintiffs in late January; the other will probably begin litigation in early summer. *Herald* editor Chris Krug hopes the series serves as an assurance that investigative journalism "continues to thrive."
—reporting by Phillip Blumberg



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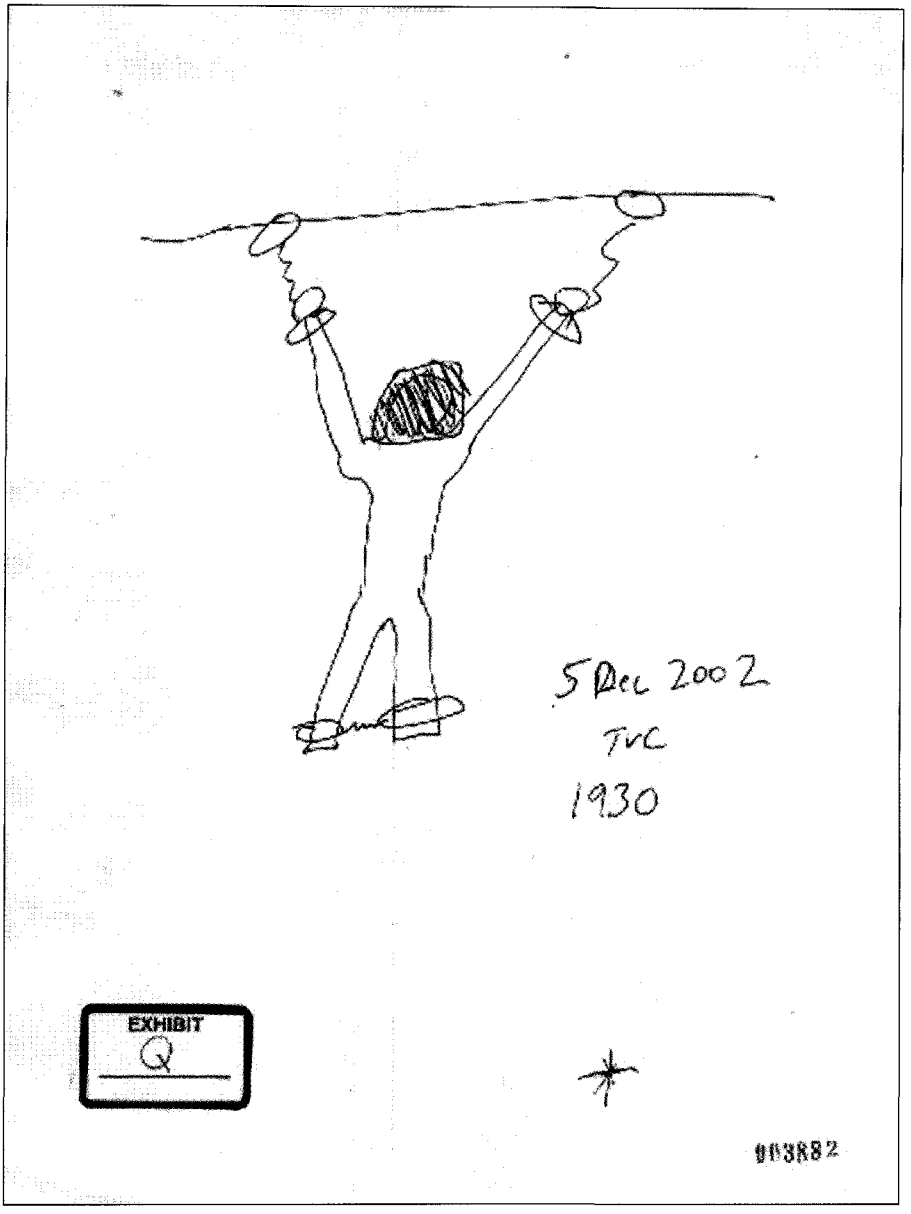

The above sketch by Thomas V. Curtis, a former Reserve M.P. sergeant, is of an Afghan detainee, Dilawar, who was taken into U.S. custody on December 5, 2002, and died five days later. Dilawar was deprived of sleep and chained to the ceiling of his cell—techniques that the Bush administration has refused to outlaw for use by the CIA. Further, his legs were, according to a coroner, "pulpified" by repeated blows. Later evidence showed that Dilawar had no connection to the rocket attack for which he'd been apprehended.

A sketch by Thomas V. Curtis, a Reserve M.P./The *New York Times*

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Introduction

In most issues of the *Washington Monthly*, we favor articles that we hope will launch a debate. In this issue we seek to end one. The unifying message of the articles that follow is, simply, *Stop*. In the wake of September 11, the United States became a nation that practiced torture. Astonishingly—despite the repudiation of torture by experts and the revelations of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib—we remain one. As we go to press, President George W. Bush stands poised to veto a measure that would end all use of torture by the United States. His move, we suspect, will provoke only limited outcry. What once was shocking is now ordinary.

On paper, the list of practices declared legal by the Department of Justice for use on detainees in Guantanamo Bay and other locations has a somewhat bloodless quality—sleep deprivation, stress positions, forced standing, sensory deprivation, nudity, extremes of heat or cold. But such bland terms mask great suffering. Sleep deprivation eventually leads to hallucinations and psychosis. (Menachem Begin, former prime minister of Israel, experienced sleep deprivation at the hands of the KGB and would later assert that "anyone who has experienced this desire [to sleep] knows that not even hunger and thirst are comparable with it.") Stress positions entail ordeals such as being shackled by the wrists, suspended from the ceiling, with arms spread out and feet barely touching the ground. Forced standing, a technique often used in North Korean prisons, involves remaining erect and completely still, producing an excruciating combination of physical and psychological pain, as ankles swell, blisters erupt on the skin, and, in time, kidneys break down. Sensory deprivation—being deprived of sight, sound, and touch—can produce psychotic symptoms in as little as twenty-four hours. The agony of severe and prolonged exposure to temperature extremes and the humiliation of forced nudity speak for themselves.

Then there is waterboarding, a form of mock execution by drowning, a technique that has been used in so-called "black sites." In addition to the physical pain and terror it induces, long-term psychological effects also haunt patients—panic attacks, depression, and symptoms of post-traumatic-stress disorder. It has long been prosecuted as a crime of war. In our view, it still should be.

Ideally, the election in November would put an end to this debate, but we fear it won't. John McCain, who for so long was one of the leading Republican opponents of the White House's policy on torture, voted in February against making the CIA subject to the ban on "enhanced interrogation." As for Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, while both have come out strongly against torture, they seldom discuss the subject on the campaign trail. We fear that even a Democratic president might, under pressure from elements of the national security bureaucracy, carve out loopholes, possibly in secret, condoning some forms of torture.

Over the past decade, voters have had many legitimate worries: stagnant wages, corruption in Washington, terrorism, and a botched war in Iraq. But we believe that when Americans look back years from now, what will shame us most is that our country abandoned a bedrock principle of civilized nations: that torture is without exception wrong.

It is in the hopes of keeping the attention of the public, and that of our elected officials, on this subject that the writers of this collection of essays have put pen to paper. They include a former president, the speaker of the House, two former White House chiefs of staff, current and former senators, generals, admirals, intelligence officials, interrogators, and religious leaders. Some are Republicans, others are Democrats, and still others are neither. What they all agree on, however, is this: It was a profound moral and strategic mistake for the United States to abandon longstanding policies of humane treatment of enemy captives. We should return to the rule of law and cease all forms of torture, with no exceptions for any agency. And we should expect our presidential nominees to commit to this idea.
—*The Editors*

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BOB BARR

As a teenager, I loved to read comic books. *Superman* comics were my favorite. Among the many adversaries the Man of Steel faced (and always vanquished) was Bizarro World. In Bizarro World, everything was the opposite of that which prevailed in our world. Up was down, clean was dirty, black was white, good was bad ... you get the picture.

Events of the past few years remind me more and more of Bizarro World, except now it's not a comic-book world, it's the real world. The effect of witnessing a federal government operating according to Bizarro World standards instead of those enshrined in our Constitution and legal system is truly frightening.

In no instance is this scenario clearer than when the current administration has addressed the matter of whether its agents have, since September 11, 2001, tortured prisoners. The difficulty in resolving this controversy is immense, because administration officials won't even discuss "torture," preferring instead to talk about "enhanced interrogation techniques." Federal officials like the latter term because it is not defined in federal or international law ("enhanced interrogation" being essentially a made-up term), and therefore activities falling within its ambit are not—cannot be—illegal.

Waterboarding is not "simulated" drowning—it is real drowning that stops just short of death.

When forced to answer questions regarding torture, as in the recent debate surrounding the technique known as waterboarding, administration officials dismiss such discussions as improper talk of vital national security matters; denigrate and dismiss such discussions as "silly," as Vice President Dick Cheney did in a recent interview; or deflect criticism by adding a waffle word in front of the operative term and sliding away. The administration and its supporters rely on the unfortunate propensity of many journalists, members of Congress, and others to accept whatever explanation is proffered without probing beneath the surface.

Waterboarding as an interrogation technique has been employed for centuries as a tool with which to elicit information from prisoners. The fact that the technique often achieves the desired result—confessions—even as it leaves no obvious physical evidence accounts for much of its popularity by practitioners, from the time of the Spanish Inquisition to Nazi Germany. Waterboarding causes excruciating physical pain as the immobilized victim's lungs fill with water. At the same time, the process inflicts profound psychological pain by creating the very real impression in the victim's mind that he faces imminent death by drowning. Waterboarding is, in essence, a torturer's best friend—easy, quick, and nonevidentiary. It had always been considered torture by civilized governments such as ours—until, of course, this administration.

The fundamental value of waterboarding to an interrogator lies in the pain it inflicts and the fear of death by drowning it engenders. Why else would it be used? However, in typical Bizarro World fashion, the Bush administration refuses to concede that the technique even exists as torture. Although experts (and common sense) tell us that if not stopped in time waterboarding will cause the death of a person subjected to it, the administration delights in referring to it as *simulated* drowning. The fact is, there is nothing "simulated" about the process of drowning by waterboarding; and there is nothing simulated about the pain it causes. Waterboarding is just drowning that stops short of death (unless, of course, a mistake is made during its infliction).

Vice President Cheney is certainly entitled to his opinion that even discussing waterboarding is "silly," but in the real world in which we live, and according to the norms of behavior according to which participants in a civilized society are supposed to operate, use of sophistry such as this would never be countenanced, and would certainly not hold up as a lawful defense in a court of law. Yet, even though the director of national intelligence, Michael McConnell, admitted recently that being subjected to waterboarding would to him be torture, like others in the administration he refuses to discuss the issue intelligently, and dismisses such questions as little things unworthy of his time.

No less an upholder of the law than the attorney general of the United States, Michael Mukasey, sets almost as low a standard for the concept of the rule of law as do Messrs. Cheney and McConnell. For the attorney general, the answer to the question of whether waterboarding (and, by clear implication, other techniques inflicting pain as a tool with which to elicit information from a detainee) constitutes torture and would therefore be unlawful lies neither in clear definitions nor in definite standards. For Mukasey, it all depends on the "situation's circumstances." Mukasey refused to answer questions about waterboarding during his 2007 confirmation hearings, but has since determined that the CIA does not engage in the practice. And that, for the nation's top law enforcement officer, is the end of the matter. Everything beyond that is simply speculative and hypothetical.

This administration has gone beyond even the Bizarro World standard of declaring up to be down or left to be right. Not only is torture not torture, but there exists insufficient clarity even to know what *is* torture so we can determine whether an interrogation technique is torture or not. While the extreme sophistry and word gamesmanship practiced to a fine art by this administration might make a high school debating coach proud, it does great disservice to the notion that we exist in a society in which there are rules and norms of behavior with clarity and definitiveness and in which government agents as well as the citizenry

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How smart is this?

Pa Heap sold all her family's belongings to care for her husband as he slowly died of AIDS. Her son is fine, but she worries she will not be able to take care of him for long because she is HIV positive.

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Pa Heap lives in Cambodia, but her story is repeated all over the developing world. Drugs costing millions of dollars are now being given to the poor. Yet many of them are hungry and malnourished.

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are held to standards of behavior. This is not something of which we as Americans should be proud, and the use of torture will come back to haunt us in ways this administration apparently either doesn't realize or simply doesn't care about.

Bob Barr is a former congressman from Georgia.

RAND BEERS

Proponents of torture or "enhanced interrogation" often argue that such techniques can yield critical information of the kind that could have prevented the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Critics, on the other hand, argue that information derived from torture is unreliable, and that it is impossible to know with any certainty whether the person being tortured actually possesses any useful information in the first place. In my view, this debate can be conclusively settled by examining the case of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi.

After 9/11, in an effort to gather information about Iraq's possible links with terrorism, the U.S. questioned al-Qaeda captives using "enhanced interrogation techniques" and transferred captives to foreign governments with known histories of torture. Al-Libi, an al-Qaeda operative, was interrogated by both the United States and Egypt, and—as was publicly reported—tortured by Egyptian authorities. During these sessions, he claimed that Iraq had trained members of al-Qaeda to use chemical and biological weapons.

Al-Libi's testimony was used by the Bush administration to substantiate its allegations that Iraq was prepared to provide al-Qaeda with weapons of mass destruction. Coupled with the claim that Iraq was on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons, the administration stated that when Iraq possessed nuclear capabilities, al-Qaeda would as well. Of all of the pieces of intelligence assembled in the lead-up to war, this one was the most chilling: the prospect of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, under Osama bin Laden's control. And so we went to war to prevent this nightmare from occurring. What better proof that torture works?

But in January 2004, al-Libi recanted his confession. He said that he had invented the information because he was afraid of being further abused by his interrogators. The CIA withdrew the intelligence. It has since emerged that some U.S. intelligence agencies doubted al-Libi's claims from the very beginning.

The administration's best case for the value of enhanced interrogation techniques, then, turned out to have been fundamentally flawed. If the consequences of torture are as catastrophic as embarking upon the Iraq War on the basis of fabricated information, it emasculates the claims by torture's defenders that the practice saves lives.

Rand Beers served as a counterterrorism adviser on the National Security Council, when he held the position of special assistant to the president and senior director for combating terrorism. He is now president of the National Security Network.

PETER BERGEN

In a Manhattan courtroom in May 2001, four men were convicted for their roles in al-Qaeda's bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania three years earlier. The evidence against them had been collected without recourse to torture, coercion, or unorthodox interrogation techniques. The attacks had killed a dozen Americans and more than two hundred Africans, and family members of some of the victims attended the trial and testified about the devastating loss of their loved ones.

The trial had other benefits, too: media coverage revealed to the world that al-Qaeda had tried to acquire material for a nuclear weapon in the mid-1990s. (Special procedures were put in place to make sure that no classified information leaked from the proceedings.) Three years after the attacks, the murderers were sentenced to life without parole. Instead of becoming martyrs, they will languish in obscurity in a high-security American prison until they die. It's hard to imagine a better outcome for the victims' families or the American public.

Contrast that with the planned military tribunal of Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (widely known as KSM), the operational commanders of the 9/11 attacks. It was announced in February that bin al-Shibh and KSM will likely appear before a panel of military judges at Guantanamo, more than six years after the assaults on Washington and New York. However, the proceedings may not start until years from now, considering the numerous legal challenges that bin al-Shibh's and KSM's lawyers are likely to mount.

Of all those potential challenges, the most potent the lawyers will raise is that their clients were tortured. The CIA has admitted that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was waterboarded, a practice that the United States prosecuted as a war crime after World War II. Bin al-Shibh does not appear to have been waterboarded. However, CIA Director General Michael Hayden recently admitted to Congress that around thirty detainees had been subjected to "enhanced interrogation techniques." Given bin al-Shibh's high rank in al-Qaeda, it would be extremely surprising if he weren't interrogated using such procedures. In short, it's hard to imagine how the handling of KSM and bin al-Shibh could have been less satisfactory for the victims' families or America's reputation.

What is perhaps most astonishing of all is that the mistreatment of KSM and bin al-Shibh was entirely unnecessary. Before they were captured, they had explained the details of the 9/11 attacks in an April 2002 interview with Yosri Fouda, an Al Jazeera correspondent. Fouda's interviews resolved key ques-

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tions that investigators still had about the plot—for instance, that United 93 was on its way to destroy the Capitol when it crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, and that al-Qaeda had once contemplated crashing planes into American nuclear facilities. KSM and bin al-Shibh explained how they kept Osama bin Laden, then living in Afghanistan, informed about the timing of the attack, and they laid out the coded correspondence they had conducted with the lead 9/11 pilot, Mohammed Atta.

The CIA provided summaries of the interrogations of KSM and bin al-Shibh to the 9/11 Commission. There is little or no difference between the account that KSM and bin al-Shibh freely volunteered to Fouda in the spring of 2002 and the version the commission published in its 2004 report. Nor was Fouda's reporting difficult to find: he hosted a one-hour documentary on Al Jazeera, wrote a long piece in London's *Sunday Times*, and coauthored a book, *Masterminds of Terror*, about KSM and bin al-Shibh. By the time CIA officials captured the pair, a full account of their operations was only a Google search away.

Obviously, then, it was unnecessary to waterboard KSM to find out what he knew about the 9/11 plot. What, though, of the administration's assertion that coercive interrogation techniques have saved American lives? To assess that claim, we must examine the details of other terrorist plots that KSM gave up after his capture, presented in a document the government released in 2006:

> *KSM launched several plots targeting the US Homeland, including a plot in late 2001 to have ... suicide operatives hijack a plane over the Pacific and crash it into a skyscraper on the US West Coast; a plan in early 2002 to send al-Qa'ida operatives to conduct attacks in the U.S.; and a plot in early 2003 to employ a network of Pakistanis ... to smuggle explosives into New York and to target gas stations, railroad tracks, and a bridge in New York.*

It all sounds very frightening, except that there is no indication that these plots were ever more than talk. The one exception is the plan by Iyman Faris, an Ohio trucker who worked for KSM, who researched the feasibility of bringing down the Brooklyn Bridge with a pair of gas cutters in 2002, an enterprise akin to demolishing the Empire State Building with a firecracker. If that is all we could discover by waterboarding the most senior al-Qaeda member in our custody, it's thin stuff indeed.

It's impossible to know whether KSM might have volunteered the same information under normal questioning, but it's worth considering the views of Brad Garrett, a retired FBI special agent who secured a fulsome, uncoerced confession from KSM's nephew, Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the 1993 Trade Center bombing. "The intelligence world has decided that collecting intelligence is different than getting criminals to tell the truth, which is complete and utter BS," Garrett told me. "Their argument is that law enforcement is working off of past tense (what crime did you commit?) and the intelligence world is trying to find out the future (what are you going to blow up?). The reality is that you must first determine if what you are getting is truthful, whether it be present or past tense."

Nothing better illustrates this point than KSM's claim that he killed the *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2002. According to a Western official who was deeply involved in the Pearl investigation, there is simply no evidence that KSM killed him. Nor did KSM mention it in his interview with Fouda, within three months of Pearl's death. KSM also had an incentive to lie: since he is almost certain to be executed, he may have calculated that confessing to Pearl's murder could help free militants jailed in Pakistan for their role in the journalist's kidnapping and death.

The U.S. government has belatedly realized that the CIA's treatment of KSM could seriously jeopardize the trial of the man who planned the largest mass murder in American history. According to the *Washington Post*, FBI and military interrogators known as the "Clean Team" have been independently collecting the same information from KSM and other al-Qaeda members that they gave to the CIA, this time using standard rapport-building techniques. (These techniques were also successful in securing a detailed confession from Saddam Hussein.) Still, legal experts have questioned whether the new interrogations can entirely remove the taint of the CIA's coerced confessions.

The torture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was entirely unnecessary. Before he was captured he spilled the details of the 9/11 plot in an interview with Al Jazeera.

Since 2006, the CIA has prohibited its operatives from waterboarding, following a Supreme Court decision requiring the administration to respect the Geneva Conventions ban on "humiliating and degrading treatment" of prisoners. In February, Congress passed a law banning the CIA from using some harsh interrogation techniques, including waterboarding. But loopholes remain, and while they do, this chapter of American history is not yet closed. The new president should formally declare in 2009 that the United States will not abuse or coerce detainees, maintain secret prisons where "ghost" prisoners are secreted, or perform "extraordinary renditions" of supposed terrorists to countries where they will likely be tortured. Only then can the United States more plausibly claim that she is the leader of the free world.

Peter Bergen is a Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation and the author of *Holy War, Inc.* and *The Osama bin Laden I Know.*

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JIMMY CARTER

Until recent years the United States has been in the forefront of condemning torture and indefinite detention without trial as fundamental violations of human rights. The Geneva Conventions are held as the unquestioned standard for the treatment of prisoners of war. I would not have believed that in my lifetime I would feel the need to call for an unambiguous prohibition against the practice of torture by agents of the U.S. government.

A burgeoning global human rights movement was, slowly but surely, taking root by the end of the twentieth century, as more and more nations sought to turn principles of human decency into the practice of greater justice for all. Tragically, the tolerance of torture by our own government is today threatening to undermine the cause of human rights and the work of those who defend these principles in the face of growing dangers.

Our nation, which overcame slavery and segregation to proudly raise the banner of human rights for all to see, now finds itself condemned amid the indelible images of human degradation, perpetrated by U.S. forces in charge of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Our government's persistent unwillingness to ban the use of torture by its own agents or to grant access to legal counsel or prospect of a proper trial to hundreds of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay emboldens those who oppose human rights elsewhere.

Those who report abuses around the world say that torture by the U.S. robs them of the ability to name and shame human rights violations.

Many courageous human rights defenders who document and report human rights violations throughout the world say that these actions by the United States rob them of the tool that has been central to their success: the ability to name and shame human rights violations. Abusive governments now believe that the rules have changed, and they too easily make excuses that sound a lot like the U.S. government's arguments to legitimize its own conduct.

As we commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United States must acknowledge that the world has become a battlefield where the rules of human rights no longer apply. We must urgently consider what this will mean for our own country and for our moral leadership in this world.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter founded the nonprofit Carter Center, which promotes human rights and the alleviation of suffering worldwide.

STEVE CHENEY

In 1991, during Operation Desert Storm, U.S. Marines faced the task of processing thousands of Iraqi prisoners of war. They did so with dignity, grace, and humanity. POWs expressed astonishment that the same Americans who had fought so fiercely in battle were now treating their prisoners so kindly. What those POWs did not initially expect (or even understand) was that the Americans would follow Article 4 of the Third Geneva Convention, which protects captured military personnel, guerrilla fighters, and civilians. Geneva applies from the moment a prisoner is captured to the moment he or she is released or repatriated. One of its bedrock provisions is that prisoners cannot be tortured. In fact, a prisoner can only be required to give his name, date of birth, rank, and service number.

In 2003, Iraqi prisoners were treated very differently. At Abu Ghraib prison, detainees were beaten, stripped naked, confined in small spaces, sexually humiliated, and threatened with dogs by U.S. Army soldiers and civilians. This violated our national values and subjected our country to worldwide condemnation.

Respect for the rule of law is a bedrock of military effectiveness, and so is a strong moral code. In 1996, the Marine Corps introduced a culminating event into the recruit training syllabus: "The Crucible." The Crucible is a rigorous fifty-four-hour field exercise demanding extensive teamwork and the application of everything a recruit has learned. Getting through it requires not only physical stamina but also a sense of moral standards, particularly the core values of honor, courage, and commitment. Marines, in short, are trained to do the right and moral thing. They are not trained to torture.

Abusing prisoners of war is not only immoral and illegal but also unhelpful at producing good intelligence. Some have suggested that torture might be necessary in a "ticking bomb" scenario. Even in an extremely unlikely circumstance of that sort, however, there is no reason to think that the information would be any more accurate as a result of torture. As Senator John McCain has avowed, "If you inflict enough physical pain on someone, they will tell you anything they think you want to know."

Condoning torture or even simply condoning practices that are inconsistent with our values puts our troops at greater risk and diminishes America's moral authority across the globe. Marine General Jim Mattis stated in 2003 before the invasion of Iraq, "We can be your best friend, or your worst enemy." Like many generals, Mattis has used harsh words and encouraged his Marines to be tough. What

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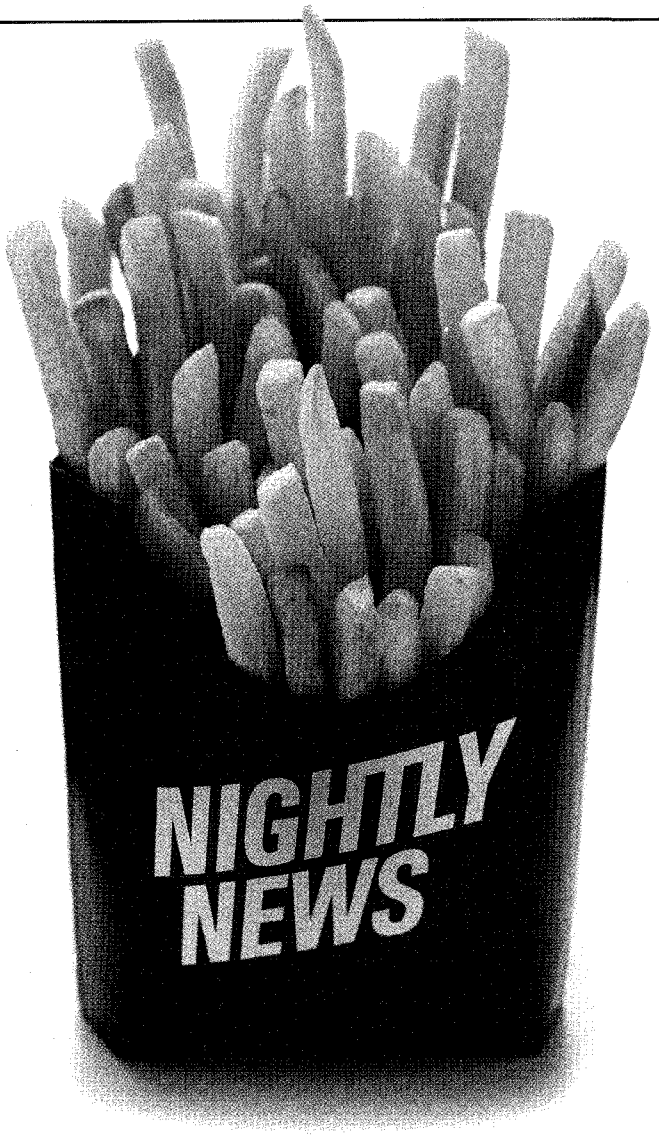

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he has never condoned, however, is torture. We shouldn't either: it is illegal, inhuman, and morally wrong.

Brigadier General Steve Cheney, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), served nine years on the Marine Corps' two Recruit Depots, including a tour as the commanding general at Parris Island. He was also the inspector general for the Marine Corps. Brigadier General Cheney retired in 2001; he is now the president of the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, Texas, and is on the board of directors for the American Security Project.

AMY CHUA

During the Second World War, my parents were children in the Japanese-occupied Philippines. My mother witnessed countless examples of Japanese brutality. I'll never forget her description of the Japanese soldiers who held her uncle's jaws open, forced water down his throat, and laughed that he would burst like a balloon.

When General Douglas MacArthur liberated the country in 1945, my father remembers running after American jeeps and cheering wildly as American troops tossed out free cans of Spam. For him, the Americans were heroes, the antithesis of the abusive Japanese. Fifteen years later, when my parents landed in Boston with scholarships from MIT, America represented to them not only economic opportunity, but also generosity and decency.

My parents stayed in this country and became American citizens. My sisters and I were all born here. As we grew up, America's power and prosperity continued to increase. By the end of the twentieth century, with the collapse of the former Soviet Union, U.S. supremacy appeared to be almost boundless.

Today, however, America's place in the world seems much more precarious. New superpowers, such as China, are emerging. The United States is beleaguered on many fronts: its economy is shaken, its reputation has been tarnished, and its treasury has been depleted by hundreds of billions of dollars poured into a war it may not win.

All of this has critical implications for the United States with regard to the use of torture. Even apart from considerations of principle, America has an urgent strategic interest in reclaiming its reputation as a moral nation.

Throughout history, there have been only a tiny handful of hyperpowers: societies that amassed such unrivaled economic and military might that they essentially dominated the world. Rome, of course, is the most famous example. As today's hyperpower, the United States is frequently compared to the Roman Empire, which also tried to wield its tremendous military power to pacify, "civilize," and bring commerce and prosperity to weaker states and peoples.

And yes, Rome practiced torture. At the gladiator games, for example, criminals and slaves, including children, were shredded by wild beasts for the entertainment of roaring crowds.

Rome was hardly alone. The kings of Achaemenid Persia (arguably history's first hyperpower, in existence from 550 BC to 330 BC), plucked out eyes, sliced off noses, and upholstered chairs with human skin. The Mongols, who conquered half the known world in the thirteenth century, poured molten silver into the eyes and ears of their enemies.

But America is not Rome, nor any of the hyperpowers that came before it. The sources of U.S. wealth and power are very different, and so is its relationship to the world it dominates.

In ancient times, empires grew rich through conquest and annexation. By contrast, America's wealth flows from commerce and immigration. The key to its success has always been its ability to draw the most talented and enterprising people to its shores. Today, in a globalized economy where countries furiously compete for the most valuable human capital, America's status as the magnet for the world's best and brightest can no longer be taken for granted.

The hyperpowers of old also inhabited a world in which the concept of human rights was unknown. Today, such rights have been codified in international law and are almost universally recognized. Ancient empires could engage in torture or brutality without losing legitimacy. The United States cannot.

The case for torture is essentially a national security argument: that extreme interrogation techniques are necessary in a fight against global networks of terrorists in which the gathering of sensitive information is crucial. In the long view of history, this is a dangerously shortsighted argument. Our national security relies on far more than rounding up and questioning terrorist suspects.

American power in the twenty-first century depends on whether the United States can be the nation that my parents and many millions of other immigrants came to know: a country that stood for both strength and decency. If we lose that moral authority, America's global dominance will be rejected by the billions of non-Americans over whom the United States projects its power. America's ability to lead, let alone inspire, will be severely compromised. And in an increasingly competitive world economy, the most talented and skilled immigrants will look elsewhere, eroding the formula for America's remarkable success that has worked for two centuries.

Many will say that America has never been the honorable nation it claims to be. That was not my parents' view, and it is not mine. If America is to retain its preeminence in the years to come, it must be not only an economic and military hyperpower, but a moral hyperpower too.

Amy Chua is a professor at Yale Law School and the author of *Day of Empire: How Hyperpowers Rise to Global Dominance—and Why They Fall.*

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RICHARD CIZIK

Do evangelical Christians have a uniform view on torture? Sadly, not yet. But I believe they should, for the reasons that follow.

The most powerful argument against torture is the Christian tenet that every human life is sacred. How can we say we are for the sanctity of human life, and then deny those God-given rights?

The second is human rights. The concept of human rights is not a secular idea, but one found in Christian sources long before the Enlightenment. Among the most basic is the right to security of person, which surely includes the right not to be tortured.

Third, there are the far-reaching consequences of torture. Since 9/11, we have exchanged our reputation as a leader of human rights for a clouded moral vision. Mistreatment of enemy combatants invites mistreatment of American troops when captured—if not in Iraq today, then in future conflicts.

Fourth, there is the simple duty that we all have as citizens to obey the law. U.S. law and military doctrine prohibits torture or cruel and degrading treatment. Yet by the government's own admission, American interrogators have resorted to the practice of waterboarding, which is a form of torture. It is also indisputably clear from the testimony of other former intelligence and military officials that we have, by other methods, tortured prisoners in custody.

Legal loopholes remain that permit most of these practices to continue. (The Intelligence Authorization Act of 2008, approved in late February by the Senate but not, as of this writing, signed by President Bush, would close many of these loopholes.) The Pentagon's revised Army Field Manual on interrogation, which bans all acts of torture and cruel and degrading treatment, should be extended to every sector of the U.S. government, without exception.

A consensus is emerging within our churches about our obligation to speak out against torture. As evangelical Christians, we have a non-negotiable responsibility to oppose a policy that is a violation of both our religious values and our national ideals.

Richard Cizik is vice president for government affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals.

WESLEY K. CLARK

Torture—the word evokes images of dark, damp dungeons and outlandish punishments and pain. But torture can take many forms, and it lives today. Incredibly, Americans are part of it. And we must put a stop to it.

Torture is illegal, ineffective, and morally wrong. The United States has signed numerous treaties condemning torture and abjuring its practice. Those treaties are the law of the land. And, yes, waterboarding is torture: in the past, we convicted and punished foreign nationals for torture by waterboarding. There are no legal loopholes permitting torture in "exceptional cases." After all, those were the same excuses used by the torturers we once condemned.

The honor of the American man-at-arms is one of our most potent weapons. It is enshrined in the Geneva Conventions. It encourages our enemies to surrender to us on the battlefield. It protects any of our own soldiers who may have been captured. It encourages noncombatants and civilians to trust us and cooperate willingly. And it does not countenance the abuse of captives in our care.

We have known this from the outset of the Republic. General George Washington emphasized the proper treatment of Hessian prisoners during the Revolutionary War, reasoning that we might win them over. In many cases, we did just that.

George Washington emphasized the proper treatment of Hessian prisoners during the Revolutionary War, reasoning that we might win them over. In many cases, we did just that.

During the Civil War, we issued the Lieber Code, emphasizing that torture to gain confessions or information was never permissible. Ever since, it has been the standard to which the American armed forces have adhered. During World War II, we trained interrogators to elicit voluntary information from our adversaries, and it worked. Today, the FBI is firm in its belief that proper interrogation doesn't require torture and that better information can be obtained without it.

Something in the American soul has always demanded fair treatment and respect for the individual. Perhaps it was our flight from the repression of the Old World and the practices of European monarchy. We were different. We expressed it in our Declaration of Independence. We captured it in our adaptation of English common law, in our trials by juries of peers, and in our spirit of justice. We were a better nation for it, more respected, more influential, and more secure. Certainly, we committed historical wrongs that today we wish we could set right, but overall we advanced, step by step, striving to live the values we professed.

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Until now. Until weak, fearful leaders had so little belief in our values and principles that they gave away our birthright and proud claim in order to follow a shadowy emulation of the very dictatorships and tyrannies we had struggled against. For shame, America, that we aren't brave enough and strong enough to live our values.

Today, in the struggle to finish off the extremists plotting against us, it won't be torture and fear that win the day for America. Far from it. Nations that torture end up despised and defeated. No, to win we'll have to live up to the values we profess, the belief in human rights, equal justice, fair trials, and the rule of law. These ideals are potent weapons. They will give us allies, friends, information, and security—but only if we live them.

We've done it before. In the thrust and parry of the cold war, America's adherence to proper standards and international law won us respect, allies, friends, and, ultimately, the influence that helped bring down the Soviet system. And we can have the same success in our fight today. We just have to make more friends and fewer enemies. And in such a strategy, there's no place for torture. Or for those who would torture.

General Wesley K. Clark, the former supreme commander of NATO, led alliance military forces in the Kosovo war in 1999. He is a senior fellow at the Ronald W. Burkle Center for International Relations at UCLA and author, most recently, of *A Time to Lead: For Duty, Honor, and Country.*

JACK CLOONAN

When we speak today of "breaking" a terrorist suspect, many people picture something grim—perhaps a subject curled up in a fetal position and begging for mercy. But it's not what I picture. I worked as a special agent for the FBI's Osama bin Laden unit from 1996 to 2002. During that time, my colleagues and I had the chance to question numerous operatives from al-Qaeda. We broke many terrorists. But we did it the right way: by being intelligent and humane.

One man we captured was Ali Abdul Saoud Mohamed, an al-Qaeda operative behind the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Ali Mohamed had fully expected to be tortured once we took him in. Instead, we assured him that we wouldn't harm him, and we offered to protect his family. Within weeks, we had opened a gold mine of information about al-Qaeda's operations.

Ali Mohamed wasn't unique. We gave our word to every detainee that no harm would come to him or his family. This invariably stunned them, and they would feel more obligated to cooperate. Also, because all information led to more information, detainees were astonished to find out how much we already knew about them—their networks, their families, their histories. Some seemed relieved to reveal their secrets. When they broke, the transformations were remarkable. Their bodies would go limp. Many would weep. Most would ask to pray. These were men undergoing profound emotional and spiritual turmoil—the result of going from a belief that their destiny was to fight and kill people like us to a decision that they should cooperate with the enemy.

We discovered a lot. Well before 9/11, we already knew how al-Qaeda was running its surveillance on embassies in London and around the world, how trainees were taught to purchase planes as small weapons, when Osama bin Laden would get up in the morning, what he would eat, and who his advisers were. We intercepted operations that were underway, we learned about important names and pseudonyms in al-Qaeda, and we assembled an extensive archive of drawings and photographs of key members of the terrorist network.

Terrorist Ali Mohamed had expected to be tortured once we took him in. Instead, we assured him that we wouldn't harm him and his family. Within weeks, we had opened a gold mine of information about al-Qaeda's operations.

Members of foreign intelligence services were often invited to sit in on our interrogation sessions. Often, they started out skeptical of our approach, offering to take over from us if we encountered any recalcitrance on the part of the suspect. In the end, though, they became believers in our methods. (Given the legal restraints under which we operated, we did not allow the CIA into our sessions, but I sent daily updates on what we had learned. No one wanted to be accused of not sharing information.)

Intelligence failures had much to do with the atrocity of September 11, but those had nothing to do with a lack of torture. Let me be clear on one crucial point: it is the terrorists whom we won over with humane methods in the 1990s who continue to provide the most reliable intelligence we have in the fight against al-Qaeda. And it is the testimony of terrorists we tortured after 9/11 who have provided the most unreliable information, such as stories about a close connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. I never regret that the FBI didn't abuse its detainees. Had we done so, we would have had much less reliable intelligence, and we would have been morally debased. By instituting a pol-

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icy of torture in the years following 9/11, we have recruited thousands to al-Qaeda's side. It has been a tragic waste.

I've mentioned that we assured our detainees that we wouldn't harm them or their families. One of our techniques for breaking them was repeating that powerful promise again and again and again. But who would believe us now?

Jack Cloonan, a twenty-five-year veteran of the FBI, was a special agent for the Bureau's Osama bin Laden unit from 1996 to 2002.

CHRIS DODD

Historical memory is painfully short. Normandy, Nuremberg, the Marshall Plan: they represent the heights of America's moral authority in the last century, and they mean everything to me. But how much do they mean to the generation coming of age all over the world in this century? How is America making itself known, right now?

Often with stories like the following (to choose just one of hundreds): A prisoner at Guantanamo was deprived of sleep for more than fifty-five days. Some nights, he was doused with water or blasted with cold air. After he had spent weeks in a state of delirious, shivering wakefulness, gravely ill from hypothermia, medical officers bound to an ethical code that instructs them to "first do no harm" strapped him to a chair, pumped him full of three bags of medical saline, brought him back from death—and then sent him back to his interrogators.

I hear that story and think, "That's impossible. That's not us. That can't be real." But to a young man or woman growing up in Amman or Caracas or Guangzhou, it is more real than the nation that once extended the rule of law to those enemies it hated the most. That nation can seem like another place entirely when you hear the stories of our secret prisons, or see the photographs from Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

But we know that it is not another place entirely. This is the country that refused for centuries to suspend its Constitution for vengeance. It is the country of which George Marshall said, "Respect for the reign of law ... is expected to follow the flag wherever it goes." In recent years, we have diverted wildly from this course. The burden is on us now to prove that we can once again be that country.

I believe the next administration could restore the rule of law—without loopholes—on its first day in office. I believe we could do it tomorrow, if we chose to. I believe that it is possible to keep our country safe and our Constitution whole at the same time.

There are many Americans who believe that this can't be done: that the terrorist threat we're facing is so vast and unprecedented that parts of our Constitution have become luxuries, and that the Geneva Conventions have been rendered, in the words of Alberto Gonzales, "quaint." They could not be more wrong.

The question is not, "Does torture work?" Of course it works. If your goal is to get a confession out of someone, then torture is an excellent tool. Almost everyone breaks eventually. If you hit a man often enough, if you keep him awake for long enough, if you fake his execution convincingly enough, he will sign whatever you want him to sign.

But how many of those confessions are true, and how many are lies to make the pain stop? How do we tell the difference? General David Petraeus has called torture "neither useful nor necessary." America's most experienced interrogators have been saying the same thing for years.

If only we were listening to them back in 2002. That was the year we sent an al-Qaeda paramilitary trainer named Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi to Egypt. Under torture, he said that Saddam Hussein trained al-Qaeda members in the use of weapons of mass destruction. That confession found its way into a speech that President Bush gave in October 2002, in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. It was a centerpiece of Colin Powell's speech to the U.N. Security Council justifying the invasion.

It was also a total falsehood. Both the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency found that it was a lie elicited by torture. But by then, it was too late: it had helped pave the way for a war in which more than 3,900 of our sons, daughters, and neighbors have lost their lives.

But if torture fails to produce credible information, it does do two things exceptionally well.

First, it puts our troops in danger. The White House has now declared that waterboarding is not torture. What is to stop other regimes from "not torturing" our soldiers in the same way? Second, torture excels at making terrorists. It can help spawn warped men who will seek revenge for the rest of their lives. Justice Robert Jackson recognized the dangers of mistreating our enemies when he explained the necessity of fair trials for Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg: "To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice," he said, "is to put it to our own lips as well."

To me, Robert Jackson is an immediate figure; my father was his deputy at Nuremberg and described him in detail in his letters home. But to my two young daughters, and to every member of their generation, he is already ancient history. To them, the history that matters most is the one we are writing right now.

Someday, when they're old enough, they'll read in their textbooks the history of a great nation that lost its way—and how, I hope, it found its way back. The most pressing question they'll have won't be about George Marshall or Robert Jackson. It will be, "What did *you* do?" That question is coming, soon, for every single one of us.

Chris Dodd is a Democratic senator for Connecticut.

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Gray area: Techniques termed "enhanced interrogation" by the White House have been used at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Chip Somodevilla/Staff/Getty Images

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KENNETH M. DUBERSTEIN & RICHARD ARMITAGE

The attacks of September 11, 2001, opened the public's eyes to the long, often violent struggle against terrorists that had been waged in the shadows for decades. The United States responded with mercy for the victims and vengeance for the perpetrators of the attack. More than six years later, we have an opportunity and a duty to reflect on our actions as a nation since that day. There is much in which we can take pride.

Unfortunately, though, we have played games with the definition of torture and intentionally blurred the lines between right and wrong. That is not a situation in which America should find herself.

In bold strokes and subtle shifts, the United States opened the door to torture in an effort to "get tough" with individuals who may have had information about additional attacks in the weeks and months following 9/11. We know, among other things, that waterboarding was used against al-Qaeda operatives in U.S. custody. As of this writing, the Bush administration refuses to rule out the use of such "enhanced interrogation techniques" while continuing to insist that officials of the U.S. government do not use torture.

Reagan understood that our response to threats must neither diminish who we are nor undermine our values. It was Reagan who said, "Coercion, after all, merely captures man. Freedom captivates him."

Let there be no mistake: waterboarding is torture—and it should never be used by the United States. No less a hero than John McCain will attest to this.

Every American president bears a mighty burden as commander in chief. We saw this firsthand with President Reagan. But President Reagan understood that our response to threats must neither diminish who we are nor undermine our values. It was President Reagan who said, "Coercion, after all, merely captures man. Freedom captivates him."

In the war on terror, we face an enemy that will not be defeated through coercion or the use of force alone. To meet this challenge, we must live up to our ideals as a nation.

Our greatest strength is found in the power of the United States to inspire belief in freedom's potential to transform the world for the better. But to have credibility, to have strength, our words and actions must embody the principles that have made America a beacon to the rest of the world for 232 years.

We will not win the war on terror merely by being brutal or tough. We must build policies that are first and foremost effective. Torture undermines our effectiveness in this struggle because it debases us. It reduces us to the same brutality as our enemies, and it alienates people around the world who, as General Colin Powell wrote, are "beginning to doubt the moral basis of our fight against terrorism."

America must keep itself free and secure by explicitly and unequivocally rejecting torture.

Across its history, America has been many things: a beacon of hope, the arsenal of democracy, a champion of human rights, and a liberator. In this long litany, there is no room for torture. It is not what we are about as a country.

Kenneth M. Duberstein is chairman and CEO of the Duberstein Group, an independent strategic planning and consulting company. He was chief of staff to President Ronald Reagan. **Richard Armitage** is president of Armitage International and served as deputy secretary of state from 2001 to 2005. Both Duberstein and Armitage are members of the board of the American Security Project.

ERIC FAIR

In the fall of 2007, after more than ten years of service to the U.S. government as a soldier, police officer, intelligence analyst, and interrogator, I enrolled in divinity school in order to pursue ministry in the Presbyterian Church. Like all second-career graduate students, I struggled to reorient myself to a life of reading, research papers, and exams. The real struggle, however, came as I worked to erase the unforgiving memories of conducting interrogations in places like Baghdad, Fallujah, and Abu Ghraib.

I'm often asked to explain how my experience in Iraq led me to seminary. There is, I suspect, an expectation that my story is one of redemption, in which something good comes out of something bad. But there was nothing good about war, nothing good about my time in Iraq.

In 2004, as an interrogator for a government contractor, I utilized or witnessed a variety of aggressive interrogation techniques designed to solicit the cooperation of Iraqi detainees. All of the techniques were officially sanctioned. They included sleep deprivation, stress positions, diet manipulation, exposure, and isolation.

My experience as an interrogator led me to a place of anger and shame. I returned home in a panicked state, unable

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to reconcile my values with what I had done. I was unable to put the building blocks of my Christian faith back together. As the chaos of war faded, the reality of my actions settled in. I became desperate for a return to chaos. Prayer, devotions, worship, and fellowship were replaced by depression, seclusion, nightmares, and alcohol.

These are the unspoken consequences of our interrogation policies. There is no escaping them. Both victim and perpetrator carry them in silence. For one it is a great injustice, for the other, a fitting punishment. With the help of trusted friends and a caring family, I'll strive for improvement, and seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Some scars will never heal.

But the scars of guilt are no longer mine alone. They are carried now by this entire nation, its people, its institutions, and its leaders. The failure of men like me to prevent these egregious acts is now eclipsed by the failure of the nation to bring "enhanced interrogations" to an immediate end.

My experience as an interrogator led me to a place of anger and shame. I returned home in a panicked state, unable to reconcile my values with what I had done.

In defense of such tactics, we hear impassioned arguments about tough decisions that must be made in the face of a ruthless enemy. Those arguments are made by individuals who insulate themselves from the consequences of their own decisions. They have neither suffered interrogation's humiliation nor wielded its destructive power.

We have waited too long to bring this horrific chapter in American history to an end. Someday soon, our children and grandchildren will want to know more about the war in Iraq. But instead of questions about the heroic battles we fought or the campaigns we won, they will ask us why, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the United States of America endorsed the use of torture.

With a deep sense of shame, I'll tell my children about what I did. But I'll also tell them how I eventually addressed my transgression as openly and honestly as I knew how. I'll tell them how I appeared before Army and congressional investigators, answered every question, admitted to every mistake, and never dreamed of destroying evidence. We must ask of those who hide behind the doors of secrecy, who refuse to give direct answers to difficult questions, who destroy the proof of their involvement, and who support and direct this shameful policy: What will you tell your children?

Eric Fair is now a graduate student at Princeton Theological Seminary.

CARL FORD

It was a profound mistake for the U.S. government to think that the tragic events of 9/11, and an understandable fear of future terrorists armed with nuclear weapons, justified its use of torture. Describing torture as "enhanced interrogations," "use of all necessary means," or "educing information" doesn't change a thing. Torture in any shape, form, or fashion is still an unacceptable practice for all U.S. officials, whether civilian or military. Even if torture worked—and there isn't even an iota of proof that it does—its use betrays every treasured principle and freedom we Americans hold dear. In the Vietnam-era Army, my superiors drilled into me that the soldier's duty was to refuse a command to torture (or any other unlawful order I might receive). When I was a young CIA officer, my superiors insisted that there was no place in American intelligence for torture or other reprehensible practices. The time is long past for our return to those wise and honorable teachings. Waiting another day to eliminate an outrageous practice is both dumb policy and irreconcilable behavior.

Carl Ford was the assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research from 2001 to 2003. He has also served as an intelligence officer in the Army, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the CIA.

LEE F. GUNN

Here are four simple truths about torture for you to consider: It is un-American. It is ineffective. It is unnecessary. And it is damaging.

Torture is un-American. Any policy of the United States that permits inhuman treatment of prisoners violates our principles as a nation and a people. Jack Bauer on the television show *24* represents a historic departure for American theater, perhaps the first prominent example of a "good guy" routinely employing torture. What does that teach impressionable viewers about our country? That under some circumstances anything goes? That desperate times call for desperate measures, and these are desperate times for the world's greatest nation? That our values can be sacrificed if we feel threatened? These are terrible lessons. Asking men and women in service to our country to torture on our behalf is repugnant, inexcusable, and completely contrary to our national values.

Torture is ineffective. Information extracted through the use of torture is unreliable. In fact, the more severe the torture is, the less reliable the information it produces. Time and again, on the battlefield and elsewhere, other means of

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extracting information have been shown to work well, preserving opportunities to return to the prisoners for more intelligence. Acting on misleading information provided by a practiced informant can cost lives and squander opportunities to thwart attacks.

Torture is unnecessary. In the hands of a skilled interrogator, humane questioning and incentives can work wonders. Torture is never right for an untrained questioner on the battlefield. Nor is it appropriate for experienced interrogators who know how to work with someone who is totally under their control.

Torture is damaging. A person who is tortured is damaged, but so are the torturers, the nation, and the military. Torturers live with feelings of guilt and disturbing memories for the rest of their lives. The nation suffers a loss of reputation that leaves it, if not irreparably damaged, at least severely diminished by its refusal to abide by its espoused standards of behavior in the realm of human rights. Finally, and perhaps most important to this writer, our military is forced to operate under conditions in which our men and women in uniform on the front lines around the world are at greatly increased risk of retaliatory torture by our enemies. A colleague of mine remarked recently that most American soldiers who will be taken prisoner in future wars have not yet been born. We owe these soldiers of tomorrow our honorable behavior in interrogating the prisoners of today.

Consistent and clear guidance to everyone in service to the country is essential. It is the duty of the commander in chief and every other person in a position of responsibility to define the limits of permissible behavior and to make sure that the standards we set are ones of which Americans can be proud. And it is the duty of our government—right now—to establish unequivocal standards for interrogation to which every department and agency of the government must subscribe.

Vice Admiral Lee F. Gunn, U.S. Navy (Ret.), is a member of the board of the American Security Project.

CHUCK HAGEL

During World War II, U.S. Army intelligence officers at Fort Hunt, Virginia, questioned Nazi prisoners of war using ingenuity, skill, and knowledge of foreign cultures. They gleaned valuable intelligence at a time when the United States was fighting for its existence against an evil equally as menacing as that which we face today. And they acquired this information without resorting to abusive techniques, such as waterboarding, that are considered to be torture.

In fact, until now, every previous U.S. administration and every civilized government in history has condemned the practice of waterboarding. After World War II, the American government convened war crimes tribunals that prosecuted and convicted Japanese soldiers for waterboarding American prisoners of war. A century ago, the U.S. Army court-martialed American soldiers for using similar methods during the Philippine insurrection. The public acknowledgment on February 5 by CIA Director Michael Hayden that the U.S. government has engaged in waterboarding is a disgrace to America and the values we represent.

In October 2005, eighty-nine of my Senate colleagues and I voted for the Detainee Treatment Act (DTA), which established the Army Field Manual on interrogation as the uniform standard for the interrogation of Department of Defense detainees. The act prohibited torture and "cruel, inhuman, and degrading" treatment of anyone detained by the U.S. government.

However, since then the need for a uniform, specific standard of conduct throughout the government has become clear. The DTA did not apply to all agencies, creating ambiguity in an area where there should be none. With the revelation of a separate CIA program that operates outside the bounds of acceptable interrogation techniques, the world has further questioned America's word.

We are in a war of ideas against a radical extremist ideology. Effective and aggressive intelligence operations are essential to our security. But in our effort to protect the nation, we must remember our greatest strength: the principles of human rights that we have upheld throughout our country's wars and conflicts. It is vital that the world can trust what we say and have confidence in what we do. There must be no doubt that this great nation does not torture.

Congress, then, must explicitly define acceptable interrogation practices. I support the use of the Army Field Manual as the single, government-wide standard.

If that standard is adopted, the effectiveness of our interrogations will not suffer. Torture is not only illegal—it also does not work. I have heard from numerous military and intelligence officers—including those World War II Army interrogators—who have seen combat and know the intelligence business. They have told the Senate that coercive interrogation generates "information of dubious value," and that "revelation of the use of such techniques does immense damage to the reputation and moral authority of the United States, [which is] essential to our efforts to combat terrorism." The Army has consistently said that the techniques authorized in the Field Manual give interrogators all the tools they require.

We must be bold and innovative in the fight against terrorism and extremism. But we must also be mindful that our actions have consequences and can sometimes serve the purposes of our adversaries. One of the greatest long-term dangers America faces is that we are now mistrusted by many nations, even our allies. In poll after poll, most people around the world say the United States plays a negative role in world affairs. As General Colin Powell has warned,

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"the world is beginning to doubt the moral basis of our fight against terrorism."

This is not a way to keep America safe, or to build our influence for good in the world. Americans must not take the easy, morally ambiguous road. That is not who we are. The right path—at times the more difficult path—is the one that is paved with our principles and our values.

Chuck Hagel represents Nebraska in the U.S. Senate, where he is a member of the Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees.

LEE H. HAMILTON & THOMAS H. KEAN

The use of torture is contrary to American values and does not serve our national interests.

As a means of extracting information, torture is unreliable. It produces too much false information. The FBI has long dealt with our country's most odious criminals without resorting to torture. According to the Army Field Manual on interrogation, coercive methods are *less* effective than other techniques in obtaining important information from people in custody.

The use of torture is an escalation of violence against our adversaries, planting the seeds of further violence and endangering U.S. soldiers if they are captured. If we do not want our citizens to face torture elsewhere, we should not torture the prisoners we hold in our custody.

The use of torture undermines and casts doubt on lawful interrogation techniques.

It alienates the world from U.S. policies, obstructs international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, and impedes the achievement of our foreign policy objectives—such as the promotion of democracy—that depend on the moral standing of the United States.

The use of torture undermines our commitment to universal human rights. It undermines the rule of law, the Geneva Conventions, and the Conventions Against Torture, which the United States has joined. Each time we hear of a U.S. citizen employing torture, we must ask ourselves: Is this who we are? Is this how we want to be known to the world? We think not.

The secrecy with which the current administration has addressed the topic of interrogation techniques—condemning torture publicly, but refusing to identify the coercive tactics now in use—is an inappropriate way for the leaders of this great nation to present issues demanding momentous decisions. The American public should have the opportunity to engage in serious dialogue and debate, and our country surely will emerge stronger and more united for it.

It should be clear in the minds of Americans what is acceptable to do—and not do—to those whom we hold as prisoners.

Is there a middle ground? No. Accepting or justifying torture will lead us down a slippery slope into a moral abyss.

We have an obligation to future generations of Americans to protect U.S. national interests—and that includes upholding the values upon which our great nation was founded.

Lee H. Hamilton and **Thomas H. Kean** are the former vice chair and chair of the 9/11 Commission.

GARY HART

The Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War in 1648, effectively established an entity that most of us today take for granted: the nation-state. In the nation-state, it is the duty of the state to protect the nation and of the nation to remain loyal to the state. When security threats to the nation arise, the state must defend against them, and, in times of danger, liberty is often at odds with security. For authoritarian states, such tension is easily resolved: err on the side of security.

The tradeoff becomes more problematic in constitutional democracies such as the United States. To be sure, our Founders were concerned about security (they wanted to "provide for the common defense," and so on), but they

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devoted much greater attention in their debate and draftsmanship to the matter of personal liberty—the protection of the individual from the intrusion of the state. One can only imagine the dismay the Founders would have felt if confronted with the arguments of Bush administration officials such as John Yoo and David Addington, who assert that our government has not only the right, but also the duty, to torture American citizens if it feels the nation to be at risk.

Since it is primarily noncitizens who have been subjected to "enhanced interrogation," however, two more issues arise: one is the practical problem of reciprocity, how other nations treat Americans they take prisoner; the other is the ethical and moral issue of what is right in our dealings with foreign enemies.

Not even the most obtuse partisan (including obtuse partisans with law degrees) could plausibly argue that the United States alone is at liberty to suspend international rules and suffer no consequences—that we can torture non-Americans captured in combat yet somehow avoid having American captives tortured in return. Since no one can make such an argument, then it follows that adherents of our policy of torture tacitly accept that American prisoners will be tortured in return. And that, I suppose they would say, is just too bad.

Only a willfully ignorant administration would trash international treaties and traditional alliances in the interest of security expediency. There is an obvious price to be paid for such actions, and it is not just that our soldiers are endangered. Everyday Americans, those possessing Jeffersonian "common sense and good judgment," have virtually from birth believed that we hold ourselves to a high moral standard, that the ideals and principles of our Declaration and our Constitution define who we are. If we abandon those ideals and principles, then our sense of ourselves will be false, and we will be seen as great hypocrites. That is why we have always adhered to international law and convention, particularly the Geneva Conventions, and why we must do so once again. To sacrifice our great principles for an ounce of security is to pay too high a price. Torture is not an instrument in the arsenal of this democracy, nor should it ever be.

Gary Hart was a Democratic senator for Colorado from 1976 to 1987, and is currently the chair of the American Security Project.

JOHN HUTSON

The United States boasts a long, honorable history of treating our enemy prisoners humanely. That history begins with General George Washington, who ensured that Hessian troops were not abused. It continues with President Abraham Lincoln, who commissioned Dr. Francis Lieber to draft rules of conduct to regulate the treatment of Confederate prisoners. What became known as the Lieber Code formed the basis for the Hague Conventions and the Geneva Conventions. As we know, the United States was a key champion of the Geneva agreements.

In more recent times, the United States has developed laws and regulations and ratified treaties that prohibit the abuse of prisoners. These include Article 93 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the 1988 Convention Against Torture, and the 1996 War Crimes Act, among others. Heretofore, the position of the United States on the subject of torture has always been crystal clear.

This approach serves us well in several ways. First, our adherence to the law of war protects our troops when they are in harm's way. We can't always expect our enemies to follow suit, but, as Senator John McCain argues, even terrorists are moderated to some small degree by the international abhorrence of torture.

Second, the United States will need to rely increasingly on coalitions to fight future wars. The potential allies we will want to fight alongside are repelled by our failure to comply with the Geneva Conventions. Only the outliers whom we disdain will be willing to fight a war that is not conducted in accordance with Geneva.

Third, torture inflicts a corrosive effect on those who perpetrate it. Would you want your son, daughter, or spouse to engage in the brutality of "enhanced interrogations"?

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Finally, there is this: Support for the rule of law and human rights is our most effective weapon. Our greatest strength isn't our military might, it is our ideas and our ideals. That's how we won the cold war. We don't have enough bombs or bullets to ensure a military victory over the enemy we now face. Nor can terrorists defeat us militarily.

However, we could commit national suicide by relinquishing our greatest weapon—our ideas and ideals. In an asymmetric war, the winning strategy is to match your strength against the enemy's weakness. This enemy's weakness is that he is bereft of ideas; all he has is terror. If we discard 225 years of American history—and the core of our identity—by engaging in enhanced interrogations, we essentially disarm ourselves.

The world knows that the rule of law does not exist if it is only applied when convenient. Human rights don't exist if they are applied to some humans and not others. This is not the time to waiver. Plato said, "Only the dead have seen the end of war." Indeed, this is not the worst war we have ever fought; it is just the present war. We don't need to torture prisoners in order to win it. In fact, torturing prisoners is precisely how we can lose it. We must remain true to ourselves and to the heritage earned by the blood, sweat, and dedication of Washington, Lincoln, and Eisenhower.

The U.S. will need to rely increasingly on coalitions to fight future wars. The potential allies we will want to fight alongside are repelled by our failure to comply with the Geneva Conventions.

Let's be clear about one point: The most aggressive technique that we use is U.S. policy. If the CIA and contractors can undertake enhanced interrogations, that will be U.S. policy regardless of what limitations are imposed on the military. Let's not delude ourselves into thinking otherwise. We are all in this together.

When historians look back on the halcyon days of America, they will conclude that what made us great wasn't our economic dominance, but our resolute support of human rights and the rule of law. It's not an unblemished history, to be sure. We have been imperfect, but we have strived mightily. The next president must return us to those values, lest historians opine that it was in the early years of the twenty-first century that the greatest nation on earth made a fatal miscalculation and started on the path to becoming the next former world power.

John Hutson is a retired U.S. Navy rear admiral, attorney, and former judge advocate general of the Navy. He is the current dean and president of Franklin Pierce Law Center in New Hampshire.

CLAUDIA KENNEDY

There is a surreal quality to the discussion of torture in the United States. In a compelling survey of public opinion last summer by the American Security Project, 92 percent of Americans said they believe that the decline of America's moral authority in the world is a serious national security issue. But when other pollsters have asked whether the United States should use torture, respondents say they are in favor of it if it will produce useful information that prevents acts of terrorism.

This suggests a moral disconnect, largely the result of misguided leadership from the White House. The president of the United States has redefined torture to allow for interrogation methods that were previously considered criminal. He has opened up a debate among Americans over whether the United States should use torture. Organizations from the UN to Amnesty International have regularly complained—justifiably—about the way America treats its detainees in the war on terror. In the battle for hearts and minds around the world, this is a devastating defeat.

As an officer in the United States Army, I saw firsthand that America was not just a great nation, but a good nation. We were able to protect our national security, and enhance it, by living up to the highest ethical standards. Torture was the purview of our enemies, not a tool to be reached for in desperate times.

In the struggle between good and evil, there is no neutral ground. Torture is evil, no matter who uses it. If we are to be a nation of laws and values again, we must reject the notion that the ends justify the means. To tolerate torture is to betray America's heritage in favor of the primitive impulse that might makes right. We are better than this. After World War II, we prosecuted Japanese officers who tortured American prisoners with the waterboard. Indeed, during the Spanish-American War, the United States prosecuted its own officers for torture, in this case the waterboarding of guerillas in the Philippines.

In keeping America safe, what we will do is important, but so is what we *won't* do. The public understands this, but Americans are also afraid. They need leaders who will help them to overcome such fear, not leaders who will prey on it. Our security depends on our ability to emerge from these dangerous times with our values intact and our moral authority restored. That will only happen when the next American president emphatically and unequivocally rejects the use of torture.

Lieutenant General Claudia Kennedy, U.S. Army (Ret.), was the first woman to achieve the rank of three-star general in the U.S. Army.

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Past crimes: American POWs Samuel Stenzler, Frank Spear, and James Gallagher, with hands tied behind their backs. After World War II, Japanese officers were convicted of war crimes for having subjected POWs to waterboarding.

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

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She served as the senior intelligence officer for U.S. Forces Command and as deputy commanding general for the Army Intelligence Center and School, and completed her Army career as the deputy chief of staff for intelligence. She is a member of the board of the American Security Project.

JOHN KERRY

Nothing has done more to undercut America's struggle against extremism than the Bush administration's squandering of our nation's good reputation. The torture, abuse, unlawful detention, and related un-American practices associated with Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and CIA interrogations at "black sites" have been as unwise as they have been unprincipled. Most of us can agree that sometimes, in the name of national security, it is necessary to make difficult ethical decisions to protect the American people. However, the administration's dangerous and counterproductive choice to employ torture has severely weakened our ability to win the struggle against extremism. It has also wasted our greatest asset: our moral authority.

As the Army's own counterinsurgency manual written by General David Petraeus warns us, stories of prisoner mistreatment strengthen the enemy's resilience and recruiting efforts.

The Bush administration's policies amount to a unilateral surrender in the battle for hearts and minds in the Muslim world. Our use of torture has played directly into a central tenet of al-Qaeda's recruiting pitch: that everyday Muslims across the world have something to fear from the United States of America. From Morocco to Malaysia, people regularly hear stories of torture and suicide at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and other overseas prisons. Many are false. But, shamefully, some are true.

The result has been a major blow to our credibility worldwide, particularly where we need it most: in the Muslim world. Pew survey research of ten countries found that in 2001, 58 percent of the people viewed America favorably; today, that number has slipped to 39 percent. Worse still, in critical Muslim nations like Pakistan and Turkey, Pew found in 2007 that only 15 percent and 9 percent, respectively, had a positive view of the United States.

These figures matter on more than one level. First, popular outrage puts pressure on governments not to cooperate with the United States—therefore isolating the United States rather than isolating the extremists. (Even with strategic allies like Pakistan, our unpopularity constrains our ability to act.) Second, as the Army's own counterinsurgency manual written by General David Petraeus warns us, stories of prisoner mistreatment strengthen the enemy's resilience and recruiting efforts.

Yet still the White House insists on its right to use torture. And for what? President Bush's own experts have told him that not only does torture put our troops at risk and undermine our global image, it produces intelligence of questionable credibility. In fact, some of the most misleading prewar intelligence supposedly linking al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein came from Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who appears to have given testimony under "enhanced interrogation methods."

Meanwhile, once the prohibitions on torture are loosened, the practice spreads. The Pentagon used high-level Guantanamo detainees to test coercive interrogation techniques, but such techniques eventually found their way to low-level detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. While images of Abu Ghraib have long faded from American minds and media, they remain fixtures, years later, across the Arab and Muslim world.

Just as it scars its victims, the use of techniques like waterboarding—invented in the Spanish Inquisition and prosecuted by the American government as a Japanese war crime after World War II—leaves its scars on a democratic society as well. Torture, which flourishes in the shadows, depends on lies—not just from those who seek to avoid torture, but from those who seek to conceal it. Four years ago, the president assured us that "we don't torture people in America, and people who make that claim just don't know anything about our country." Today we know that to have been untrue. Today, his new attorney general continues to engage in legalistic parsing of whether waterboarding amounts to torture.

Our next president will have to begin repairing the damage. That means an end to torture, an end to outsourcing torture, and an end to indefinite detentions. The first step in this process is to close Guantanamo—an enduring symbol to the rest of the world of a government set morally adrift after 9/11. For America to reclaim its historical leadership role, we must once again lead by example.

In short: we need to make America be America again. We must restore our moral authority and global leadership by deploying the full arsenal of our national power with smarter diplomacy, stronger alliances, more effective international institutions—and fidelity to the values we have always stood for as a nation. It is time for the United States

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to again make clear what presidents from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan knew for certain but this administration has preferred to muddy: on the issue of torture, there is no compromise. America must not weaken the values that make us strong.

John Kerry, Democratic senator for Massachusetts, was the Democratic Party's nominee for president in 2004. He is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a member of the board of the American Security Project.

HAROLD HONGJU KOH

Eight years ago, as the assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor, I testified to a United Nations committee in Geneva that the United States is "unalterably committed to a world without torture." I continued: "Torture is prohibited by law throughout the United States. It is categorically denounced as a matter of policy and as a tool of state authority. In every instance, torture is a criminal offense. No official of the government—federal, state, or local, civilian or military—is authorized to commit or to instruct anyone else to commit torture. Nor may any official condone or tolerate torture in any form. No exceptional circumstances may be invoked as a justification for torture."

That unequivocal statement was not asserted casually—it had been previously agreed to by dozens of government officials. None of us dreamed that within a decade, our government would openly practice torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and that many Americans would defend the policy.

Official cruelty has long been considered both illegal and abhorrent to our values and constitutional traditions. The commitment to due process and the ban against cruel and unusual punishment are legal principles of the highest significance in American life. There is no constitutional authority that licenses the president to authorize the torture and abuse of prisoners.

As a professor of law, I was therefore sickened by the Justice Department's August 2002 "torture opinion," which concluded that U.S. officials can order the torture of suspected terrorists with impunity. I have worked in both Democratic and Republican administrations, including as an attorney in the office of the Justice Department that drafted that opinion. I understand the tremendous pressures that government lawyers labor under. Nevertheless, I considered this opinion to be a disgrace, not only to that office, but to the entire legal profession.

When the opinion was written, the governing policy was zero tolerance of torture. The new opinion essentially asked, "How close to the line can we come when abusing people?" It narrowly defined torture as "[p]hysical pain ... equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death." Such a definition would exonerate torture techniques used by Saddam Hussein's security services, including electric shocks administered to the genitals and burning with blowtorches.

The opinion undermined the basic human rights principles set forth at Nuremberg. It also twisted the U.S. ratification of an international treaty against torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, somehow arriving at the conclusion that the agreement condoned such abuses. In effect, the opinion licensed the executive branch to commit future Abu Ghraibs by degrading and dehumanizing detainees in U.S. custody, regardless of whether they hold any information of value in the war against terror.

The administration withdrew the memo in 2004, and has since retreated from some of its most extreme legal assertions. However, despite these gestures, it has still not backed down from the claim that torture in the shadows must remain an essential part of our antiterrorism policies. The Bush administration still argues that Congress has no power to regulate interrogation procedures, that past acts of waterboarding were legal, and that lawyers who object to the use of waterboarding are engaged in unpatriotic "lawfare."

The Bush administration's definition of torture would exonerate techniques used by Saddam Hussein's security services, including electric shocks administered to the genitals and burning with blowtorches.

We should be careful, of course, to avoid being diverted by sideshows. Of the thirty-four detainees who have died in American custody since the war on terror, none have died from waterboarding. The administration has employed a number of other interrogation techniques that clearly violate domestic and international law, and that still have not been explicitly banned in the most recent legislation passed by Congress. Although pundits obsess about the fictional "ticking-time-bomb" scenario, experienced interrogators confirm that torture rarely succeeds in extracting the truth, particularly under time pressure, and only ends up degrading both the victim and the perpetrator.

America is a country founded on human rights. Human

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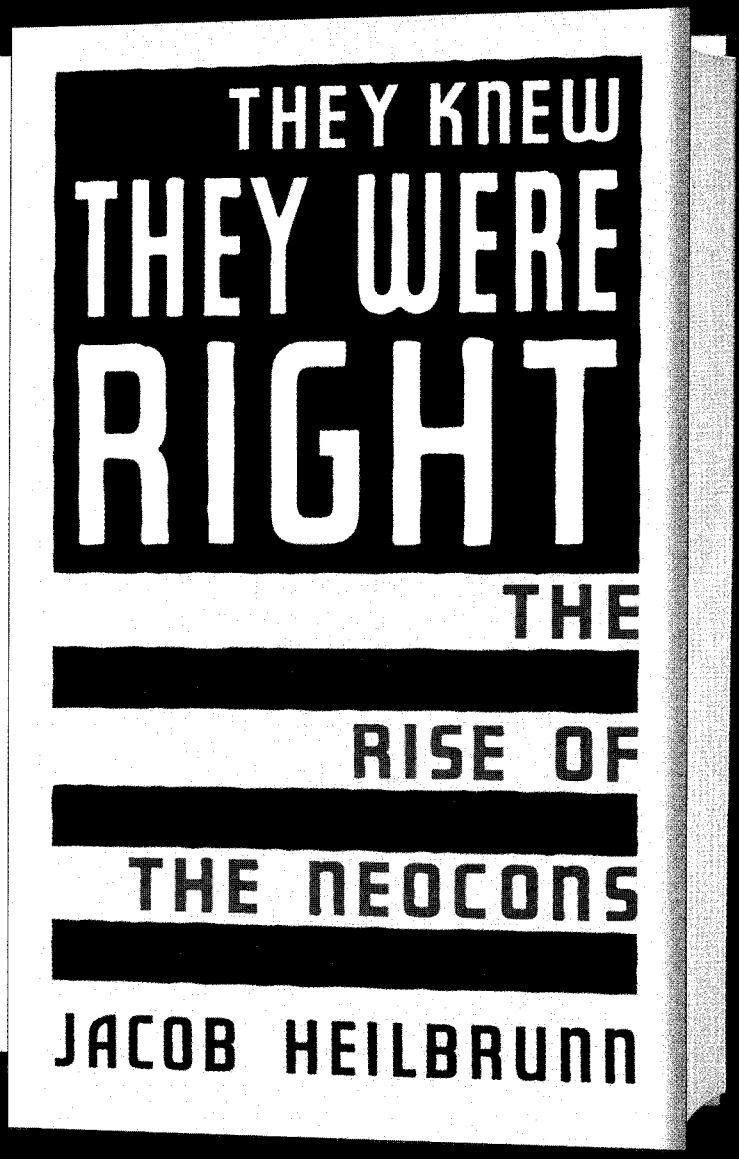

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rights define who we are as a nation and as a people. A ban against official cruelty is one of our most sacred values. If we condone it, we gain nothing, and lose our identity.

Harold Hongju Koh is the dean and the Gerard C. and Bernice Latrobe Smith Professor of International Law at Yale Law School. He previously served as an attorney in the Office of Legal Counsel, and as assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor from 1998 to 2001.

CARL LEVIN

At the end of last year, a group of congressional staffers traveled to Saudi Arabia to meet with senior Saudi government officials. In two meetings, the staffers raised concerns about a case in which a Saudi rape victim was sentenced to three months in prison and ninety lashes and then had her sentence doubled to six months in prison and two hundred lashes after she spoke out publicly. In both instances, the Saudi officials responded by simply saying "Guantanamo" and "Abu Ghraib." As if to say, "Who are you to lecture us about due process and human rights?"

When we fail to live up to the standards we profess, the rest of the world sees us very differently from how we would like. For many around the globe, the symbol of American values is no longer the Statue of Liberty; it is that horrific photograph of a hooded prisoner at Abu Ghraib, standing on a box, tethered to electric wires.

When the president of the United States says we are exempt from the Geneva Conventions and free to practice "enhanced interrogation techniques," it is intolerable for many reasons: it is morally wrong and in violation of our basic values; it produces unreliable information and causes prisoners to resist cooperation; it violates domestic and international law; and it jeopardizes our own troops if they are captured.

Beyond all of those strong arguments, the specter of torture detracts from the undeniable rightness of our cause in the fight against terrorists. People at home and abroad are less likely to believe that a confession was freely given if we have abused detainees. Even with an admitted terrorist like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who confessed to masterminding 9/11, the world may focus more on how we treated him, rather than on what, by his own words, he did to us. It is essential for our security that we and the world focus on understanding what Khalid Sheikh Mohammed did, what he would do next if he could, what produces and motivates the terrorists of the world, and what methods and capabilities they have and use. That focus gets blurred when credible allegations of a policy of torture get thrown into the mix.

People we need as friends and allies are less likely to be forthcoming if our image as a beacon of human rights and human liberty is tarnished. One person halfway around the world overhearing a terrorist plotting an attack against us can prevent the mass murder of our citizens if he reports it. But that citizen in some foreign land may not report the threat against us if he views us as arrogant and hypocritical.

Simply put, we need the understanding and goodwill of the world for our own security. That's not mushy-headed intellectualism; it's hard-headed pragmatism. I try to visit regularly with our veterans at VA hospitals in Michigan. Last year, I had a conversation with a veteran who was lying in his bed. I asked him, "What can we do to help you?" He responded: "Win back the respect of people around the world for America." That veteran understands that the erosion of support for America weakens us in a way that military force cannot remedy. For the sake of the security of our nation, we must win back that respect and make America a beacon once again for human rights and human liberty around the world.

Carl Levin is a Democratic senator from Michigan and the chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services.

RICHARD LUGAR

The Military Commissions Act, which became law in 2006, reaffirms U.S. commitments under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, prohibiting any person in the custody or control of the United States, regardless of nationality or physical location, from being subject to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

No nation is more closely associated with a set of founding precepts than the United States, and no nation is judged more meticulously according to its own articulated values.

I believe it is vital for the protection of our troops in the field and our moral authority in the world that we continue to uphold a policy against torture.

We owe our military service members clear guidance on appropriate treatment and interrogation of detainees. Recent

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public debates over what constitutes torture have often revolved around such hypothetical questions as what the United States should do with a prisoner known to be a terrorist and who we believe has knowledge of an impending attack. Such hypothetical circumstances can be compelling in the abstract. But as a matter of national policy, we must not condone, rationalize, or practice torture or anything that resembles it.

Fundamental moral principles do apply to nations, and they must be a central element of U.S. foreign policy. No nation is more closely associated with a set of founding moral precepts than the United States, and no nation is judged more meticulously according to its own articulated values. Some advocates of a rationalist foreign policy would say that jettisoning the American moral identity would be a good thing, arguing that we could more easily exert power if we did not feel compelled to concern ourselves with debate over ethical inconsistencies, or worry that foreign nations would accuse us of hypocrisy when our actions do not live up to our historic moral values. However, this thinking is misguided. It is true that American moral traditions impose some constraints in some situations. But I believe that, ultimately, this moral identity is a source of international power that we should not relinquish.

Exercising authority in the present age requires allies and the ability to build coalitions. It is far easier to do that if the United States maintains the respect that derives from our moral traditions.

Richard Lugar, a Republican from Indiana, is the ranking minority member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

LEON E. PANETTA

According to the latest polls, two-thirds of the American public believes that torturing suspected terrorists to gain important information is justified in some circumstances. How did we transform from champions of human dignity and individual rights into a nation of armchair torturers? One word: fear.

Fear is blinding, hateful, and vengeful. It makes the end justify the means. And why not? If torture can stop the next terrorist attack, the next suicide bomber, then what's wrong with a little waterboarding or electric shock?

The simple answer is the rule of law. Our Constitution defines the rules that guide our nation. It was drafted by those who looked around the world of the eighteenth century and saw persecution, torture, and other crimes against humanity and believed that America could be better than that. This new nation would recognize that every individual has an inherent right to personal dignity, to justice, to freedom from cruel and unusual punishment.

We have preached these values to the world. We have made clear that there are certain lines Americans will not cross because we respect the dignity of every human being. That pledge was written into the oath of office given to every president, "to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution." It's what is supposed to make our leaders different from every tyrant, dictator, or despot. We are sworn to govern by the rule of law, not by brute force.

We cannot simply suspend these beliefs in the name of national security. Those who support torture may believe that we can abuse captives in certain select circumstances and still be true to our values. But that is a false compromise. We either believe in the dignity of the individual, the rule of law, and the prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment, or we don't. There is no middle ground.

We cannot and we must not use torture under any circumstances. We are better than that.

Leon E. Panetta is a former congressman and White House chief of staff. He currently directs the Panetta Institute for Public Policy.

NANCY PELOSI

The use of torture violates fundamental American values. It damages the reputation of the United States in the eyes of the international community, and it increases the risks for our military personnel, diplomatic officers, and intelligence agents around the world. Many intelligence professionals have stated that torture is ineffective: it is unlikely to produce the kind of timely and reliable information needed to disrupt terrorist plots. The negative consequences of the use of torture far outweigh the supposed benefits.

For decades, the United States used the Geneva Conventions as the standard for the treatment of captives, and we regularly condemned conditions and practices not in accord with the Conventions. Now, Bush administration officials have admitted that the United States has used waterboarding on at least three suspected terrorists, while refusing to define which interrogation methods would constitute torture.

To uphold American values and to underscore our belief that torture is wrong, the House of Representatives in December voted to expand the current prohibition against torture so that it applies not only to the Department of Defense but to all U.S. government personnel. America is on stronger ground ethically, morally, and practically when our practices for holding and interrogating captives are consistent with the Geneva Conventions—when we don't torture. The next president should make the return to that standard our highest priority.

Nancy Pelosi is the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

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WILLIAM J. PERRY

Torturing prisoners, whatever short-term benefits it might produce, comes at the cost of two huge long-term liabilities: it undermines our ability to negotiate with other nations from a position of moral strength, and it increases the risk that American prisoners, military and civilian, will be subjected to torture. The United States should return to its traditional rules for treatment of prisoners.

William J. Perry was the nineteenth U.S. secretary of defense.

PAUL R. PILLAR

The immediate, specific results of torture are easier to discern—and thus tend to receive more attention—than the consequences that are remote, inchoate, and immeasurable. Our fear of terrorism, like any other kind of fear, exacerbates this narrowing of cognition. We dwell on hypothetical bits of critical information that we hope will save lives if they can be extracted from hardened terrorists.

But the inchoate and immeasurable may be more important than the immediate and specific. The prisoner who knows the location of a ticking time bomb may be a good hypothetical scenario for classroom discussions of counterterrorist ethics, but I find it hard to think of any real-world cases that this scenario resembles. We are told that "enhanced interrogation techniques" have yielded other forms of useful counterterrorist information. We are not told, however, about the effect the awareness of our use of torture may have on the attitudes of foreign publics and foreign governments. Those attitudes are important, even if our perspective does not extend beyond counterterrorism, for they help to determine how many people will attempt terrorist attacks against the United States and how much help the United States will receive in thwarting those attacks.

Over the last few years, the terrorist threat has become less a problem of a single determined group such as al-Qaeda than a problem of the spread of extremist and anti-American sentiment. Future terrorist attacks will come from individuals, cells, and groups that emerge from that poisonous sentiment. Information extracted from prisoners may have some effect on how many Americans die from terrorism over the next few years, but the broader attitudes of foreigners, especially Muslims, toward the United States—and toward the use of force and violence in pursuing their goals—are apt to have far more impact.

These considerations alone argue against the use of torture. The argument becomes still stronger after one ponders two other questions. One is whether torture is effective in producing accurate and useful information, and to what extent the good information is offset or even outweighed by bad information a prisoner may offer to end the pain. Sometimes information can be checked to determine whether it is good or bad. Sometimes it cannot, or it can cause damage before its veracity can be determined. A case worth considering is that of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, the Islamist who, after being captured following the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, made disjointed assertions that Iraq was training his fellow extremists in chemical and biological weapons. The Bush administration seized upon these allegations in making its case to invade Iraq. However, a year after the Iraq War began, al-Libi recanted his assertions and said he had made them while being abused by his interrogators.

The other question—and this is where we need to broaden our perspective further—is what effect torture has on other American interests besides counterterrorism. Important though the fight against terrorism may be, it is far from our only interest. We have many other foreign policy objectives. It is hard to imagine how an image of the United States that includes the practice of torture would further any of those objectives. It is much easier to imagine ways in which it would hurt, particularly by increasing the moral distaste, or at least the political cost, to other governments contemplating cooperation with Washington.

Last, but certainly not least, we must consider our own values as Americans. Terrorism—in the fullest and most literal meaning of the word—entails not just physical attacks but the imposition of a state of fear. In the same way, conquering terrorism involves not just preventing attacks and therefore saving lives, but protecting the quality of the lives that are saved. An important part of what is most admirable and valuable about American life is that we have eschewed practices—like torture—that resemble those used by America's foes, including the tyrannies that America has opposed in the past and the terrorists that it confronts today.

Paul R. Pillar served for twenty-eight years in the U.S. intelligence community, including as deputy chief of the Counterterrorist Center at the Central Intelligence Agency. He retired in 2005.

TIM ROEMER

As a member of the 9/11 Commission, I listened to hundreds of briefings and dozens of testimonies and read thousands of documents detailing the intricacies of the terrorist attacks that occurred on Sept-

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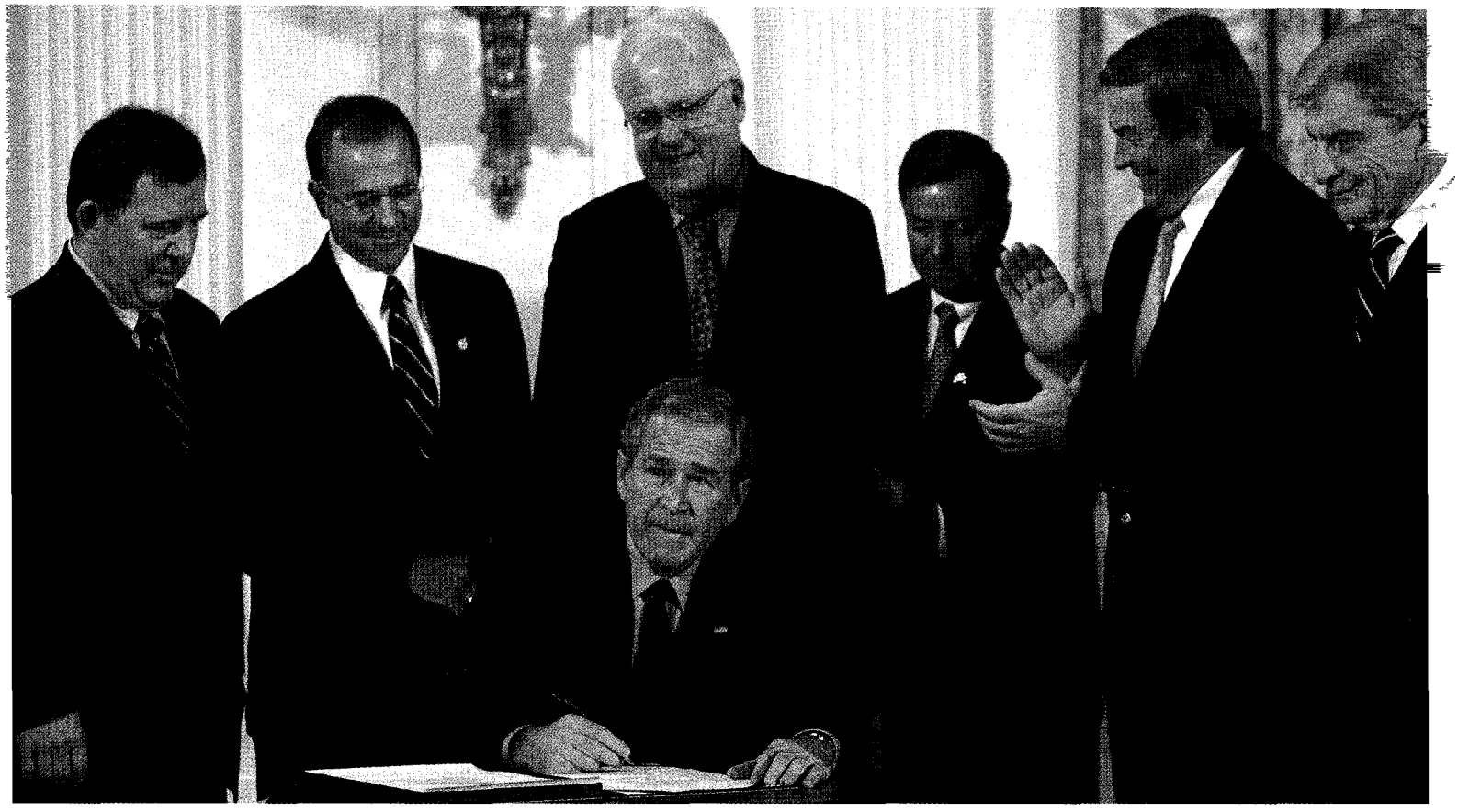

Green light: President Bush signs S. 3930, the Military Commissions Act of 2006, on October 17, 2006. The legislation authorizes the creation of military tribunals and immunizes CIA officers from prosecution for having engaged in activity characterized as torture.

Brendan Smialowski/Stringer/Getty Images

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ember 11, 2001. Witnesses, intelligence experts, and officials from Democratic and Republican administrations identified mistakes and missed opportunities that could have helped disrupt the plot. In all that time, no one suggested to me that if only we had tortured someone, we could have prevented 9/11. And for good reason: torture would not have spared the life of a single one of the 3,000 people killed that day.

Since then, some people have come forth—that so few do so publicly is telling—to argue that the United States should adopt torture as a policy instrument in order to prevent a recurrence of what torture could not have prevented in the first place.

In its modern incarnation, torture, as well as cruel, inhuman, and degrading interrogation tactics, has failed to grant its practitioners decisive advantage. While fighting the IRA in the 1970s, the British abandoned their use of coercive interrogation practices and have since managed to achieve a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. France's use of torture in Algeria failed to defeat the National Liberation Front; indeed, it helped turn the Algerian public against France's colonial presence.

More recently, the Bush administration has declared that the use of "harsh interrogation techniques" has elicited actionable and accurate intelligence. The experience of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a captured al-Qaeda leader reportedly tortured into confessing knowledge of Iraqi WMD, suggests otherwise.

Ultimately, we cannot torture our way out of terrorism, but we can certainly torture our way into more of it.

Those who argue in favor of torture usually do so in the scenario of a single suspect with knowledge of a "ticking time bomb." This hypothetical never addresses how torture would have to work in the real world, or how we would defuse the next bomb after America is revealed as a practitioner of torture.

For instance, in August 2006, British intelligence thwarted a plot in which terrorists planned to smuggle liquid explosives on board transatlantic airliners in order to blow up the planes. Why did this plan fail? A member of Britain's Muslim community became suspicious of the activities of an acquaintance. Anxious to avoid a repeat of the horrors of the July 7 London subway bombings, he alerted the police, and a British intelligence agent was able to infiltrate the group. Torture, by contrast, keeps the next critical intelligence source at home, putting American citizens in danger.

Ultimately, we cannot torture our way out of terrorism, but we certainly can torture our way into more of it. Torture trades the illusory promise of short-term gain for the near certainty of eventual loss. It tries to convince us that we can defeat terrorists on the cheap by avoiding the long, hard work that counterterrorism entails. The Army's Field Manual on counterinsurgency tells us that this work comprises building a government's legitimacy and denying terrorist and insurgent groups like al-Qaeda the political oxygen they need to survive. Very few things could be more toxic to our legitimacy than the image of the world's greatest democracy practicing one of the world's oldest evils.

America is more than capable of defeating al-Qaeda. How we choose to do that makes all the difference, both in this fight and the battles to come.

Tim Roemer was a member of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. From 1991 to 2003, he was a member of the House of Representatives, where he served on the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He is now the president of the Center for National Policy.

JOHN SHATTUCK

There's a yawning gap today between the values professed around the world by the United States and our real-time actions. Promoting democracy and human rights and using torture during the interrogation of prisoners do not go together. In his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Joseph Nye reminds us that a nation's power derives from "the attractiveness of its culture, political ideals, and policies. When its policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, a nation's soft power is enhanced." The converse also applies. Today, American culture, political ideals, and policies are losing their global appeal in part because of what the United States has done to human rights in the war on terror.

The Bush administration has flaunted basic requirements of human rights law. These include the Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Conventions, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The result has been the creation of a law-free zone in which foreign detainees in U.S. custody overseas have been brutally abused; thousands of foreign citizens have been held indefinitely as "unlawful combatants" without being treated as prisoners of war; and repressive regimes around the world have been given a green light to crack down on political dissidents and religious and ethnic minorities in the name of fighting terrorism. These actions have contributed to what a Pew Institute international opinion survey reported in June 2007 is "a global crisis in confidence over the US handling of world affairs ... most apparent among Muslims in the Middle East."

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The Bush administration's disregard for international law in its policies on terrorism is perhaps best exemplified by a 2002 memorandum prepared by then White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales. The memorandum stated that "terrorism renders obsolete the Geneva Conventions' strict limitations on the questioning of prisoners." No recent president has questioned the rules of international humanitarian law in times of war. The administrations of Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford during the Vietnam War, and George H. W. Bush during the Gulf War, all adhered to the Geneva requirements. They understood the danger of abandoning the high ground. As another 2002 memorandum, by then Secretary of State Colin Powell, pointed out, jettisoning the Geneva Conventions would "reverse over a century of US policy and practice, undermine the protections of the law for our troops, and provoke negative international reaction, with immediate adverse consequences for the conduct of our foreign policy."

Repairing the damage to American values and moral authority around the world must be a top priority of the next president. The United States should announce that it will close the detention center at Guantanamo and transfer detainees to the United States or their home countries for trial or release. It should also make clear that it is bound by the Geneva Conventions as a matter of law. Reestablishing a policy of providing individualized status hearings to detainees would demonstrate a respect for international norms.

None of this would prevent the government from conducting lawful interrogations of suspected terrorists. Nor would it prevent it from trying detainees in military commissions if there is evidence that they have participated in war crimes or crimes against humanity. But it would recommit the United States to a national security policy conducted within a framework of human rights and the rule of law, and it would allow the next president to begin to restore America's soft power in the world. It's an effort that's dangerously overdue.

John Shattuck, a former assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor and U.S. ambassador to the Czech Republic, is CEO of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation.

ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER

Torture is wrong because it rarely works. Torture is wrong because the damage it does to us in the world far outweighs the specific information we get. Even if we get information that actually succeeds in stopping a particular attack today, we often breed legions of new terrorists tomorrow. Torture is wrong because we endanger our own soldiers when they are captured abroad, which explains why so many of our leading military officers have consistently been among the strongest advocates of adherence to international treaties prohibiting torture and cruel and degrading treatment. Torture is wrong because we degrade not only the victims, but also ourselves, beginning with the young men and women ordered to carry out such treatment. When an army captain named Ian Fishback wrote to Senator John McCain begging for clear interrogation rules, he recalled that as a cadet at West Point he had resolved "to ensure that my men would never commit a dishonorable act; that I would protect them from that type of burden."

I can make all these arguments. I believe them. But what I really want is an America that will simply stand up and say, as President Bush did when he saw the Abu Ghraib photographs, that this is not who we are. That America is an idea more than a place, an idea that cannot coexist with the use of force by an all-powerful state to break a human spirit. That the men and women who fought to establish and defend that idea across the generations believed that our values were more important than life itself. If we cannot take that stand, then we are not the country I thought I knew.

Anne-Marie Slaughter is the dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. She is the author of *The Idea That Is America: Keeping Faith and Our Values in a Dangerous World.*

THEODORE C. SORENSEN

Any torture of enemy captives by U.S. military personnel or contractors:

1. is a violation of the United States Constitution, federal criminal statutes, and international law, and subject to the severest criminal penalty, even if done under orders from a superior;
2. is contrary to the precepts of every major religion and moral code;
3. has been repudiated by all knowledgeable law enforcement agencies and experts as an investigative tool wholly unproductive and unreliable, inasmuch as torture victims will say anything, usually unverifiable, including spontaneous falsehoods, in order to stop the torture and preserve their lives;
4. is increasing the likelihood that any captured or kidnapped U.S. personnel, whether military or civilian, will be subjected to torture from their captors; and
5. is evidence of a sick mind and an uncivilized chain of command.

Theodore C. Sorensen is former special counsel to President John F. Kennedy.

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WILLIAM H. TAFT IV

When the subject is torture, opera fans like me think of Puccini's *Tosca*, in which the hero, Cavaradossi, is tortured for refusing to reveal the hiding place of a colleague. Nearby is Tosca, Cavaradossi's lover, who is horrified by Cavaradossi's screams of agony and divulges the secret he is trying to keep. Things get worse. When Scarpia, the torturer, tries to rape Tosca, she kills him. Finally, Cavaradossi is executed, and Tosca commits suicide, vowing to avenge herself on Scarpia in the next world.

Tosca says it all. Torture can have fatal consequences for everyone involved in it. Victims of torture often harbor dreams of revenge, unable to forgive someone who has not only hurt them but also robbed them of human dignity. Attempted rape is commonplace among torturers, whose stock in trade is the abuse of power over others and a freedom to indulge in sadism. Normally nonviolent people who would never think of hurting others and have no interest in politics—"*Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore* ..."—can, when confronted with torture, be driven to kill in order to protect or avenge themselves and those they love.

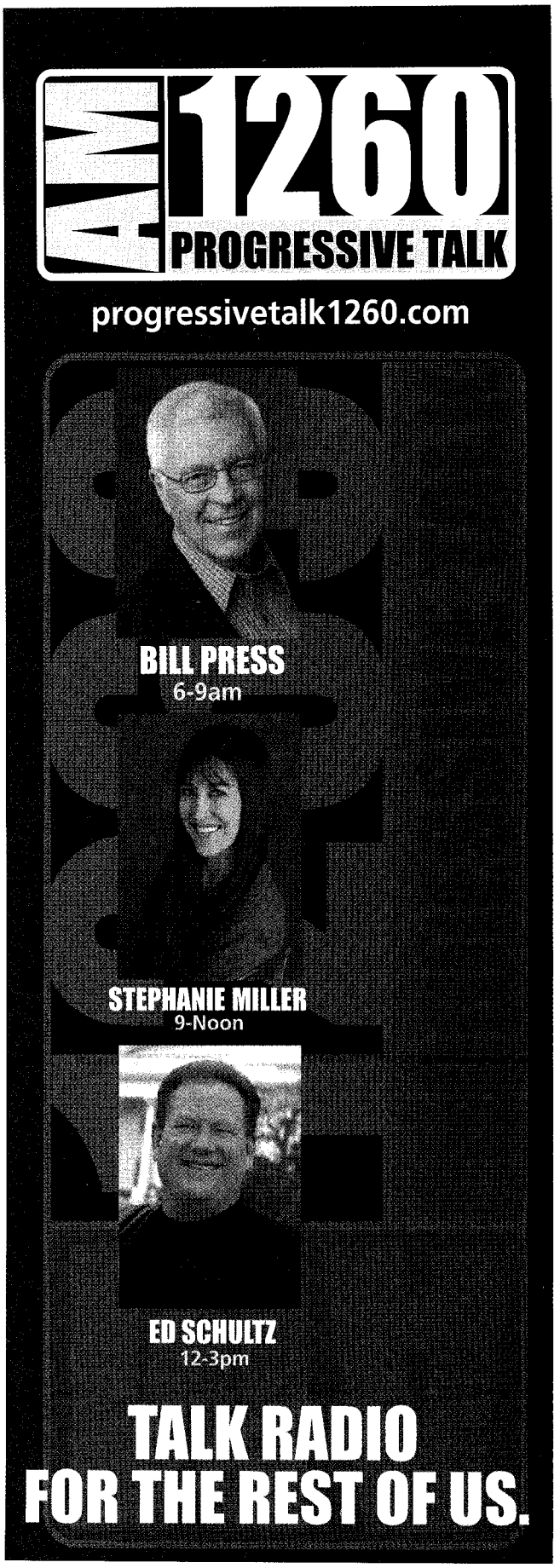
Puccini's opera is a sublime piece of music. It's also a timeless reminder of the price that is paid for what some call enhanced interrogation.

William H. Taft IV served as general counsel and deputy secretary of defense in the Reagan administration, and as the chief legal adviser to Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2001 to 2004.

THOMAS G. WENSKI

In my years of working to help refugees, immigrants, and other people in need, I have learned how cruelty is often inflicted on the most vulnerable. I want to give voice to their suffering and speak out against torture. Torture is abhorrent in the eyes of the Church as it undermines and debases the human dignity of both victims and perpetrators. It is never a necessary cruelty. Pope Benedict XVI, in a September 6, 2007, address, said, "I reiterate that the prohibition against torture cannot be contravened under any circumstances."

As chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I have written several letters to Congress urging passage of legislation to prohibit torture as an interrogation technique. In 2005, our Conference of Bishops was successful in encouraging Congress to adopt provisions prescribing uniform standards for interrogating detainees held by



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the Department of Defense and prohibiting cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. When Congress adopted these provisions, we hoped the United States would regain the moral high ground on the question of how we should treat detainees. However, legislation that would expand this ban on torture to other agencies and agents of the U.S. government is still hotly debated and has yet to be signed into law.

This issue has a major impact on the way the United States is viewed abroad. I believe the United States must insist upon the highest ethical standards and fully comply with earlier commitments to observe international law in its treatment of detainees, whether here in the United States or abroad.

The United States has a history of championing human rights and has long supported Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits "cruel treatment and torture" as well as "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment." Our own troops and citizens benefit from such protections. As the U.S. combats terrorism, we must recognize that any report of prisoner mistreatment by the United States or its allies could seriously undermine these efforts.

More importantly, prisoner mistreatment compromises human dignity. A respect for the dignity of every person, ally or enemy, is essential to security, justice, and peace. There can be no compromise on the moral imperative to protect the basic human rights of any individual incarcerated. Our nation must not embrace a morality based on an attitude that "desperate times call for desperate measures" or "the end justifies the means." As the Golden Rule teaches, our nation must treat its prisoners as we would expect enemies to treat our own military personnel or citizens.

In the end, the issue of torture is about us, not them; it is about who we are as a people. It is strategically wise to treat detainees humanely. It is also morally urgent.

Thomas G. Wenski is the bishop of Orlando and chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

LAWRENCE B. WILKERSON

Between 2002 and 2005, I was chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell. During that time (which included the invasion of Iraq), I learned that America's armed forces were involved in practices that violated the Geneva Conventions, the International Convention Against Torture, U.S. domestic law, and the written and unwritten moral code of the American soldier. Simply put, American fighting men and women were abusing detainees. I later learned that they were doing so on the basis of policies being set by senior members of the Bush administration. As someone who had spent thirty-one years in the Army, I was appalled. Not only was my beloved Army being corrupted, but U.S. prestige and power were being diminished across the globe.

In 1999, the Israeli Supreme Court, deliberating on torture and abuse, wrote that even though a "democracy must often fight with one hand tied behind its back, it nonetheless has the upper hand." Today, America has lost that upper hand, and the strategic repercussions are momentous.

In capitals around the world, America's voice no longer resonates powerfully in the name of human rights and dignity. We have corrupted that voice, perhaps irreparably. We have handed the people who wish us harm an invaluable recruiting tool. To visit a Web site created by radical jihadists is to understand that their most powerful advertisements are the prison at Guantanamo Bay, the photographs from Abu Ghraib, and the presence of U.S. combat forces in Iraq. If the surest way to defeat terrorists is to dry up the support they have from within the Muslim community, then we are taking the surest path to doing the opposite.

Yes, our enemies often treat those Americans whom they capture far worse than we treat them. That is indisputable; that is one reason they are our enemies. It does not matter that they do not live up to their obligations; it only matters that we do. This is what we did in both Korea and Vietnam, even though the North Koreans and the North Vietnamese paid little heed to the laws of war. If we don't follow the rules, we have weaker legal grounds on which to demand that our own soldiers be treated fairly, or that reparations be made, or that simple justice prevail. And, from a purely moral point of view, we cannot live with ourselves if we do not live up to our values.

Torture and abuse are not American. They are foreign to us and always should be. We need to exorcise them from our souls and make amends.

To fight well, American soldiers require a just cause, plain objectives, and clear rules. Those rules are especially important because any army has people who fail to meet its standards or who lack restraint and judgment. Rules must be strictly enforced, and violations must be punished. That's why tossing out the rules after 2001 was so perilous. When American soldiers were given ambiguous orders and directives that implicitly condoned—and even encouraged—the blurring or breaking of normal boundaries, abuses were inevitable. I should note that many soldiers refused to partici-

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pate in the abuse of detainees, even in the face of pressure from superiors, and from that I take heart. While their resistance should be honored, however, it should never have been necessary.

The French like to say that during World War II all of France could hear the screams from those tortured within the Gestapo's headquarters in Paris on the rue Lauriston. Those who heard those screams undoubtedly found consolation in the thought that the German invaders would be expelled and that Frenchmen would never engage in such abuses. But they would. In the war in Algeria, the French resorted to torture—and for decades France struggled with its soul as the worst horrors of that war were revealed.

The worst horrors of our war have yet to be revealed—but they will be. Secret prisons, renditions, homicides, torture, and innocents swept up in a vast network of detention—all will be revealed. It is the nature of our openness that it be so. We must start now to recognize our crimes and our complicity. We are all guilty, and we must all take action in whatever way we can. Torture and abuse are not American. They are foreign to us and always should be. We need to exorcise them from our souls and make amends.

Colonel Lawrence B. Wilkerson, U.S. Army (Ret.), was chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2002 to 2005. He is now the Pamela Harriman Visiting Professor of Government and Public Policy at the College of William and Mary.

STEPHEN N. XENAKIS

In late 2002 and early 2003, Mohammed al-Qahtani, more commonly known as the "twentieth hijacker," underwent a series of interrogations at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. According to interrogation logs obtained by *Time* magazine, al-Qahtani was questioned for eighteen to twenty hours each day, for forty-eight days. He was threatened with dogs, exposed to sweltering heat and icy cold, placed in "stress positions," prevented from sleeping for several consecutive days at a time, stripped naked and humiliated by female interrogators. At one point, his temperature fell to a potentially fatal ninety-five degrees. On another, his heartbeat dropped to thirty-five beats per minute (a normal resting heartbeat is sixty to one hundred beats per minute).

On these occasions, a doctor treated al-Qahtani in order to return him to his interrogators. Once, while Qahtani was being treated by doctors for hypothermia, loud music was played to prevent him from sleeping. And when interrogators were having difficulty breaking Qahtani down, they sought to humiliate him further. A medical corpsman injected him with three and a half bags of intravenous fluid. Qahtani was refused permission to go to the bathroom and urinated in his pants.

The participation of doctors and military medical officers in these activities was a clear violation of the basic code of medical ethics to "first do no harm." The roles and responsibilities of military medical officers conform to ethics and principles that have been widely recognized across national boundaries and military engagements. Medical officers are expected to stand up for these professional principles at all times, and treat all soldiers, even the enemy captured in combat, with dignity and humanity. The American Medical Association has issued ethical guidelines stating that physicians should not conduct, monitor, or directly participate in the interrogation of prisoners or detainees, and are required to report coercive interrogations to authorities.

It is troubling enough that the military physicians have been put in a position that compromises their fundamental ethics. Yet there is an even greater danger to our national security when physicians are used as agents of pain and harm. When doctors are implicated in cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, then the credibility of our military and our nation suffers across the globe. The assertion that physicians are participating in torture unravels any argument that America is acting on high moral principles.

Although military doctors serve alongside soldiers and interrogators in our armed forces, their roles and responsibilities are not the same. Soldiers are trained to kill, interrogators to extract information. Doctors are different; they hold a special place in the hearts of people throughout the world because of the powers their training gives them to relieve suffering. The idea that military doctors would use those skills and techniques to inflict pain, or to aid those who cause suffering, is shocking. By putting physicians in that position, our government has sent a horrible message to the world.

Until now, perhaps the most well-known image of the American military doctor was Hawkeye Pierce of *M.A.S.H.*, who protected his patients from dubious orders from his superiors, even when his patients were enemy soldiers. Now, the world's impression of the American military doctor is something quite different. The International Committee of the Red Cross has accused American military physicians of participating in actions that are "tantamount to torture." Al Jazeera and the BBC have reported extensively on the role that physicians have played in the abuse of detainees.

Military commanders have long recognized that torture and cruelty undermine and endanger our service members. Our troops in Baghdad face danger every day as they combat an aggressive insurgency. The legitimacy of their mission is degraded by the slightest hint of impropriety. It is hard to imagine anything more damaging than reports that American physicians have been implicated in brutality toward prisoners. The practice of torture and abuse must end, in order to preserve the honor of our physicians and our country.

Stephen N. Xenakis, MD, is a retired brigadier general in the U.S. Army.

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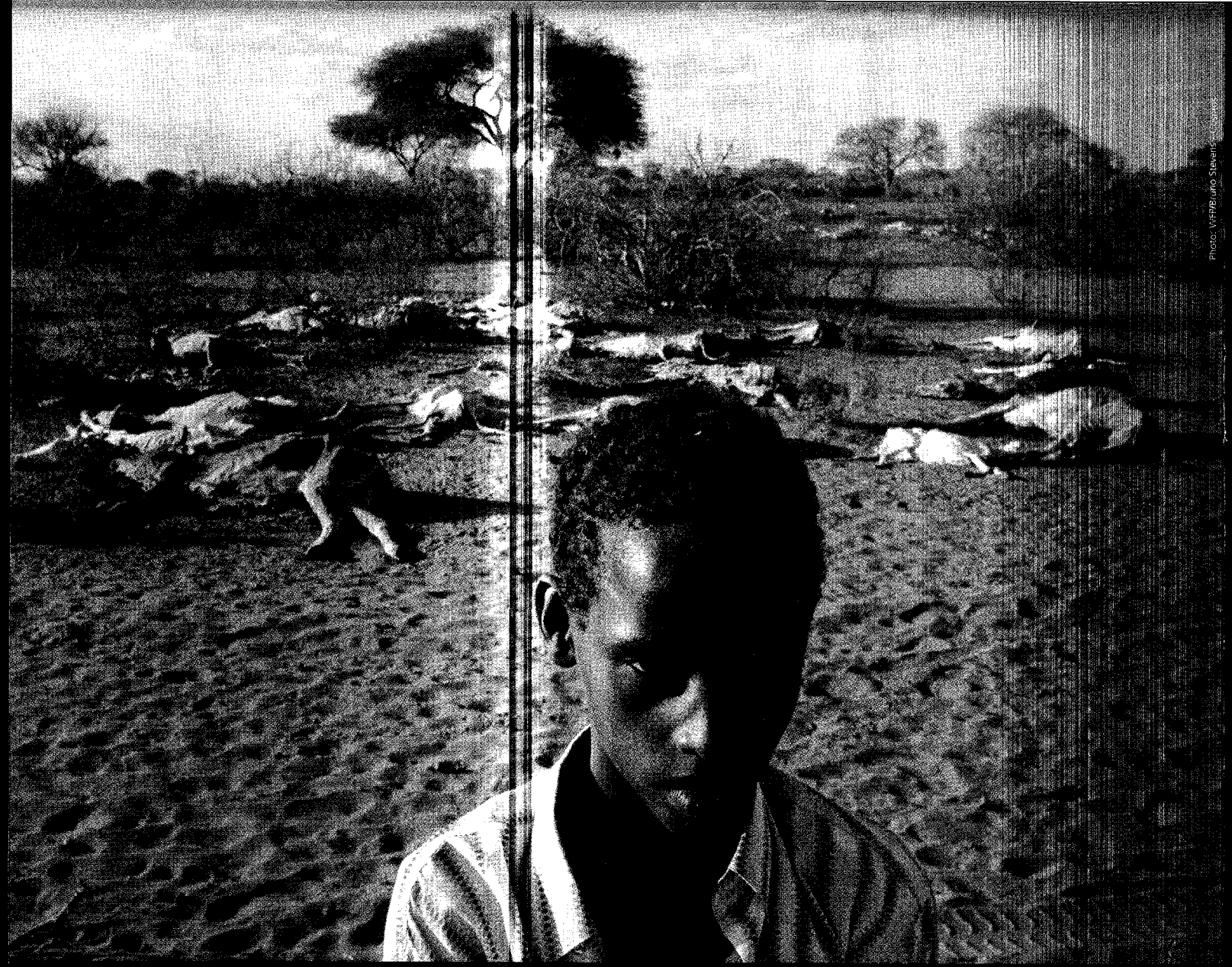

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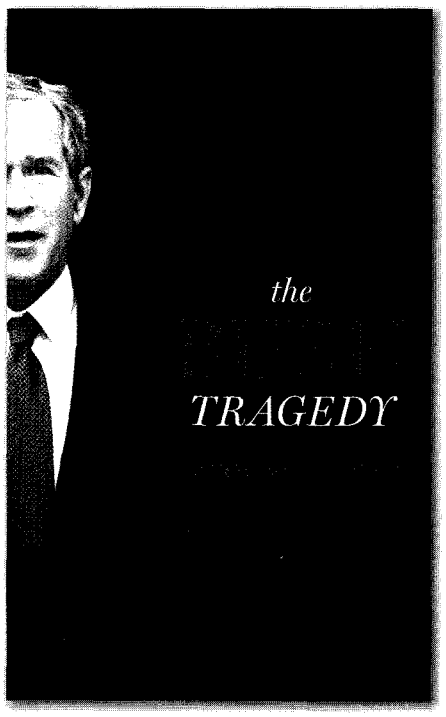
The Roots of W.

How the president inherited his truculence and recklessness from the Walker side of his family

By Jacob Heilbrunn



The Bush Tragedy
by Jacob Weisberg
Random House, 304 pp.

As George W. Bush's presidency lurches to its dolorous conclusion, even the most hardened Bush hater might be forgiven for quailing at the sight of another book examining it. Despite Bush's own professed contempt for second thoughts, his presidency has spawned an entire subgenre of accounts detailing his failings, written by administration insiders and journalists, that shows no sign of going away.

It is hard to imagine that another Bush chronicle has anything new to offer, but *Slate* editor Jacob Weisberg manages this feat. As the editor of several collections of Bush malapropisms ("Bushisms"), Weisberg might seem an unlikely candidate to provide a dispassionate dissection of the man. But that is exactly what *The Bush Tragedy* supplies. We are all aware of the subject's faults—a proclivity for extremism, boastful truculence, impatience with debate, distaste for intellectual exchanges, reckless decision making, blind loyalty to his subordinates, and a host of other less-than-winning characteristics. Instead of cudgeling Bush for his manifest shortcomings, however, Weisberg embarks upon a kind of psycho-biography in an attempt to explain what is really behind these character flaws and why the Decider decides as he does.

Weisberg locates the answer in the early history of the Bush family. The tensions between the Walker and Bush clans, he argues, formed the essential backdrop to George W.'s own troubled life and presidency. This is tricky territory. But Weisberg largely avoids crude reductionism, offering many illuminating insights into Bush's behavior and actions.

The patrician side of the Bush family is well known. Prescott Bush (grandfather of the current President Bush) was the Republican senator from Connecticut, and seemed to be the very personification of the WASP ethos. Descended from James Smith Bush, a well-connected Episcopal preacher who wrote several books and venerated public service, Prescott Bush's social life consisted of performing with the Whiffenpoofs (a Yale a capella group) and attending Greenwich town council meetings. Prescott's college career is remarkably like the fictional character Dink Stover in Owen Johnson's 1912 satire *Stover at Yale*, which lauded the notion of sacrifice for the greater good. In it, Stover declares what would become Prescott's credo: "He suddenly realized the stern discipline of it all ... subordinating everything to one purpose, eliminating the individual factor ... an immense idea of sacrifice and self-abnegation." Prescott's ideal was tending to the public weal, not accumulating wealth. He even insisted that his grandchildren call him "Senator." At the Round Hill Country Club in Greenwich, he stormed out of the locker room when a friend told a dirty joke in front of his son, George H. W.: "I don't ever want to hear that kind of language in here again," he fumed.

Much less well known is the other side: the Walker family of St. Louis, led by the swashbuckling and raucous playboy George Herbert "Bert" Walker, the father-in-law of Prescott Bush. Bert Walker excelled at boxing, polo, and golf, winning the amateur title as the Missouri heavyweight champion. He set up a boxing ring in his house,

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where he pummeled his sons, in the hope of toughening them up. A bold speculator, he won and lost several fortunes (though he was shrewd enough to liquidate his portfolio right before the 1929 stock-market crash) and drove around in his own chauffeured Rolls-Royce during the 1930s. Rowdy, profane, and obnoxious, he was even described in the prim official family history as "coarse." But this didn't stop him from putting on airs: a kind of Jay Gatsby figure, Bert had a weekend home on the north shore of Long Island, where he would appear in white tie and was waited upon by liveried butlers. Another grand estate was located in Santa Barbara. The Walkers were parvenus who lived large—the very sort of thing that Prescott Bush, the would-be leader of an egalitarian and frugal clan, despised. The Walkers' glittering world of yachts, race-horses, estates, and servants was simply anathema to him.

Rowdy, profane, and obnoxious, George Herbert Walker set up a boxing ring in his house, where he pummeled his sons.

"Drilling into the history of the Walkers and the Bushes," Weisberg observes, "one hits layer upon sedimentary layer of conflict among brothers, cousins, uncles, and grandparents." So deep was the conflict that decades later George H. W. Bush would one-up the Walkers by purchasing their ancestral vacation spot, Kennebunkport, from them. In the end, Yankee thrift had won out over Jazz Age profligacy. According to Weisberg, "Poppy's hostile takeover of Kennebunkport represented the submersion of the St. Louis clan and the repudiation of its mercantile values. He would turn it into the anti-Hyannisport, a place where nobody drank to excess, everyone went to sleep early (in the right bed), and got up for church on Sunday."

In essence, the Walkers were gamblers; the Bushes, conservators. Guess which model George W. ended up following? His aim, as Weisberg reminds us, was to distance himself from George H. W., who had tried to live up, as far as possible, to Prescott's lofty ideals. Weisberg diagnoses a frustrated hero worship on the part of George W. not unmixed with disdain for the New England aristocracy. The era of the WASP ascendancy was coming to a close. Vietnam protests flourished. Affirmative action loomed at Yale, and leftist intellectuals held sway. The riffraff was becoming the new meritocracy. "By graduation," reports Weisberg, "Bush had defined himself as the scourge of intellectual snobs, who were fast replacing the social kind."

But if George W. was struggling to find his footing in this new era, so was his father. George H. W. was not immune to the Walker influence: after graduating from Yale, he moved to Texas to become an oilman, which fit into the Walker mold. But unlike the Walkers, he applied himself to learning the oil business methodically from the ground up. But George H. W.'s attempt to fit into the right-wing Texas culture never quite took. While he won election to the House of Representatives in 1967, he never made it to the Senate, losing to the folksy Ralph Yarborough, for the second time, in 1970 (years later, during his run against Michael Dukakis, Bush would be ridiculed for claiming that pork rinds were his favorite snack). George W. was not slow to draw the lesson that his father's self-conscious patrician restraint hindered his ability to succeed in the buccaneering culture of Sunbelt conservatism. The lesson became even clearer after Ronald Reagan polished off George H. W. for the 1980 Republican presidential nomination. George W. admired what he saw as a true "Western man." Reagan, not his old man, would become his lodestar.

In short, he wanted to become a true Texan, rejecting, as far as possible, his New England patrimony (which, incidentally, was hardly minimal—schooling: Andover, Yale, and Harvard; vacations: Kennebunkport). Rowdy and boisterous, he would head back to the Walker roots of his family. In Weisberg's view, "George W. Bush likes to say he is his mother's son. But many of his most distinctive traits don't seem to come from her or from his father. He is impatient, aggressive, often angry, and sometimes cruel. He's a plunger, not a careful analyst or a patient builder. The man's a Walker, through and through."

In the 1970s, the Walker approach did not serve George W. well. He didn't strike it rich prospecting for oil. In contrast to his father, he refused to approach the business systematically. Instead, George W., "who thought success was a matter of rolling the dice with borrowed money, never struck lucky." Sound familiar? It was Bush's pattern: decades later, in Iraq, he gambled again and lost. As Weisberg sees it, "Driven by family demons, overflowing with confidence, and lacking any capacity for self-knowledge, Bush seems to me to have done precisely what we should have expected of him."

What Weisberg means by this isn't simply that Bush flubbed up. It's that it was almost preordained, in large part because he engaged in a form of intellectual mutilation by rendering himself as incurious as possible. According to Weisberg, "Bush's self-image as a Churchillian leader, the anti-Poppy, meant that he didn't need to delve into endless rounds of diplomacy or spend time studying the history of Iraq ... Others could handle those details." Bill Clinton had it right: "He doesn't know anything. He doesn't want to know anything. But he's not dumb."

The same superficiality, Weisberg suggests, extends to Bush's ostentatious religious piety. It isn't that Bush doesn't believe in a higher father, as he likes to put it. It's that much of his religiosity, Weisberg contends, amounts to no more than atmospherics. Religion for Bush, which he glommed onto during his battle with the bottle, is, we are told, more a self-help program than a deeply thought-through belief system. It has been Vice President Dick Cheney, not a higher power, who's been guiding his thoughts and actions. What's more, Bush's newfound religiosity, Weisberg suggests, provided him with another way to outdo his father's rather tepid embrace of evangelical Christians. George W. would be the complete package, the successor to Ronald Reagan who would go even *him* one better in launching a global crusade for freedom.

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Family ties: Prescott Bush and his clan, including (back row, far left) George H. W. Bush

AFP/Getty Images

As Weisberg plunges into the Bush presidency itself, however, he begins to lose the thread of the family's influence on George W. The problem here may be that while Bush's early actions—scorning the advice of realists such as Brent Scowcroft and James Baker—can be viewed in terms of besting his father, once Bush embarked upon the Iraq War he encountered a series of events that prompted him to offer shifting rationales to defend it. Psychologically, for the GOP, the memory of the Vietnam War seems to be one of the biggest current driving forces. The *Wall Street Journal*, for example, keeps publishing pieces bemoaning America's failure to stop the communists in Vietnam, the loss of honor, and the urgency of preventing a repetition of that calamitous war. It seems likely that Senator John McCain will make this part of his campaign as well—and he doesn't share a father with George W. Bush. (Though family military tradition clearly weighs heavily in McCain's case.)

The British historian Sir Herbert Butterfield referred to the "Whig interpretation of history," in which each event of the past is interpreted as inevitably leading to the strengthening of liberty and progress worldwide. Weisberg, who traces Bush's sins backward to his ancestors, may be engaging in a reverse form of Whiggism. He essentially contends that character is destiny, which would strike many historians, who are interested in larger trends and forces, as somewhat anachronistic. Missing in Weisberg's meditation on Bush is a larger context that takes into account the GOP's capture by the far right. Bush wasn't operating in a vacuum, and we know he isn't much of a brooder. How much of his presidency has been shaped by psychological forces, and how much by sheer opportunism?

While Weisberg may at times overemphasize the influence of family on Bush, it doesn't really detract from his account. Fluently written and probing, the book covers a tremendous amount of ground with great panache. While it contains no footnotes and boasts little original research, Weisberg never gets mired in pointless detail. *The Bush Tragedy* is an imaginative attempt to reconstruct Bush's emotional and mental world. Ultimately, it suggests that in betraying his father, Bush ended up betraying himself. A pity that everyone else has to pay the price. WM

A frequent contributor to the *Washington Monthly*, **Jacob Heilbrunn** is senior editor at the *National Interest* and author of *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons*.

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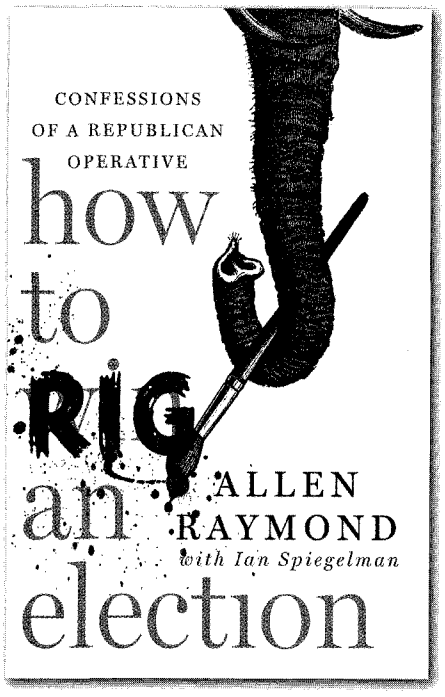
The Wiseguy



How to Rig an Election: Confessions of a Republican Operative

by Allen Raymond
Simon and Schuster, 256 pp.

A repellent street-level GOP operative's surprisingly entertaining memoir

By Joshua Green

Pick up a Washington memoir in the hope of gleaning hidden truths, or even just a feel for the texture of life in the capital's inner sanctums, and you're likely to come away disappointed. Washington memoirs may not be any more opaque, gilded, and self-serving than other kinds, but they sure feel that way. That's because most are written not for the reader, but for the writer. If you're a big enough deal that you're committing your thoughts to paper, chances are you're thinking mainly about your own career advancement, and as the recent memoirs of the presidential aspirants made plain, this rarely yields much beyond bland self-promotion. Readers willing to lower their sights a bit discover small rewards. Staffers' memoirs are more likely to traffic in score settling and limited truth telling—Nancy's astrology fixation, Hillary's communion with Eleanor Roosevelt's ghost. But even here unearthing the diamonds requires a pickax and a strong back, because for aides, too, the premium for publishing is really no different: If you aim to get ahead—and who in Washington doesn't?—you'd better be careful who you cross. So these tend to be mountains of banality as well. One reason the index is the part of the book Washingtonians flip to first is that if you know who's going to get the knife it's easier to skip right to it.

Such shortcuts are entirely unnecessary with *How to Rig an Election: Confessions of a Republican Operative*, because it's clear from the book jacket that the author, Allen Raymond, won't be getting ahead, and, owing to the circumstances of why this is so, has a knife out for just about everybody. Raymond is the veteran GOP operative who used his phone-banking business to jam Democratic phone lines in New Hampshire on election day 2002 in order to upset the party's voter-turnout operation. Republicans swept the midterms, including the big Senate race in New Hampshire, but things didn't turn out nearly so well for Raymond. He was busted by the feds, abandoned by his own party, and wound up serving time in prison, the stooge in a scandal that clearly reached much higher. *How to Rig an Election* is Raymond's revenge on the party that screwed him—an angry, unsparing, and occasionally funny look at the seamy underside of politics by a man who seems to have embodied all its worst qualities.

What separates this memoir from most others is that Raymond, fresh from a jail stint, holds no illusion of having a future in politics and seems refreshingly disinclined to try to convince us that he has been somehow misunderstood. He is free to tell the unfettered truth. That he has done so here cannot seriously be doubted, because Raymond, by his own account, is as thoroughly cynical and repellent a memoirist as I've ever encountered.

Nature, not nurture, seems to have been the cause of this, since it's clear that he was a bad seed long before he entered politics. The scion of the Underwood Typewriter fortune, he was kicked out of prep school for smoking pot, enjoyed a postcollege spell squandering his inheritance, and wound up in advertising, "the low man on the Ty-D-Bol account." Raymond claims not to have been much interested in politics until a combination of boredom and low admission requirements impelled him toward pursuing a graduate degree in political management. A man of no fixed beliefs, he decided to become a Republican after graduating because it was the early 1990s and a friend told him "that's where all the money's heading."

Raymond started out as a nobody in the roughneck world of New Jersey politics and quickly decided that the gunslinger image cultivated by so many operatives was the aspect

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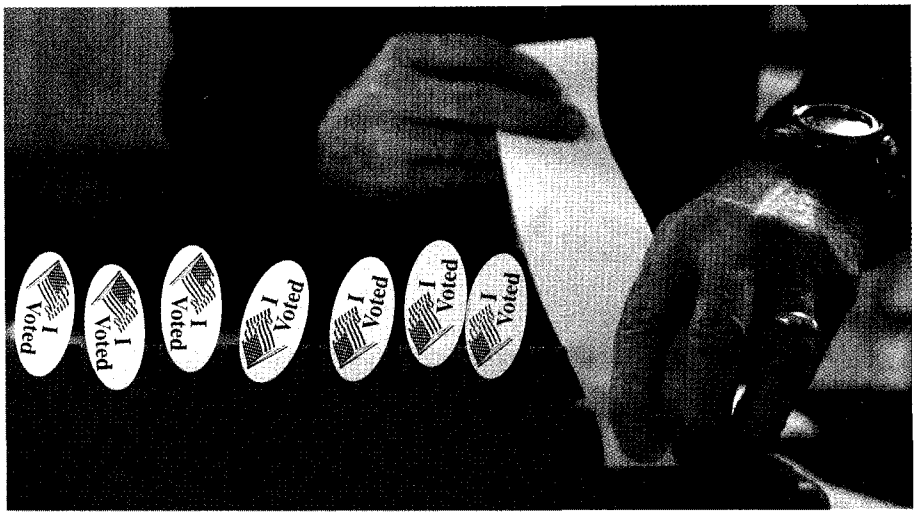

Ben Sklar/Stringer/Getty Images

of politics that appealed to him most. In New Jersey Republican circles, ideological purity takes a backseat to the interests of the local machine, so a consultant skilled in political combat and unburdened by a sense of principle or fair play can do well for himself. Raymond was precisely such a consultant, and most of *How to Rig an Election* is devoted to ticking through the many sordid highlights of a career spent managing candidates who probably deserved no better than they got.

There is, for example, the assemblyman who beat his wife and who Raymond manages to spin to victory. There's the ditzy blond socialite whose rich, pushy friends drive her campaign to imminent disaster. There's the former prosecutor and defense lawyer whom Raymond describes as "unencumbered by any ideals," who eventually makes it to Congress. Winners and losers alike are thrown under the bus. Raymond has it in for both parties and the electorate, too. Voters are "dupes." Democrats are "baby killers." His own Republican Party is bursting with "knuckle-draggers, gunnies, committed-ideologue nuts" and "backwoods hayseeds" spouting "pro-life snake-handling babble." The only difference between the parties that matters to Raymond is how willing they are to do anything to win, and only here do we detect a flash of professional pride. "When it came to playing in the gutter, we were the professionals," he writes. "The Dems weren't even junior varsity."

Raymond is never happier than when he is splashing in the gutter, and his catalog of dirty tricks would do Nixon proud. To annoy the supporters of two opponents in a Republican primary, he hires a phone bank to make repeated calls on the opponents' behalf during the Super Bowl. To stoke latent feelings of racism, he hires inner-city black men to call white suburban Democrats to "encourage" them to vote for Raymond's opponent, betting they'll do just the opposite. His coup de grâce comes during the race with the ethically challenged prosecutor. Just before election day, with the contest neck and neck, the campaign discovers that its Democratic adversary, a sheriff, ran over and crippled an off-duty policeman several years earlier, but managed to seal the legal records and arrange a financial settlement with a nondisclosure agreement. They track down the victim in a hospital and persuade him to confide his story (likely in violation of his nondisclosure agreement). Then he calls a press conference and uses the episode as the campaign's closing attack. "I could only have been happier if we'd caught him touching small children," Raymond confesses. As the prosecutor airs the charges to the news media, Raymond works the crowd to distribute T-shirts attacking the opponent as "Hit and Run Herb."

"I was a dick," Raymond writes. "That was my job, and I was pretty good at it." The reader nods vigorously in agreement.

The absurd title and the publicity material that accompany *How to Rig an Election* endeavor mightily to present Raymond and his story as a far bigger deal than they deserve to be. The hope is that we'll accept him as a top-flight GOP operative in the presidential race who possessed Rove-like powers (or what people used to imagine were Rove's powers—not so much anymore, huh?) and used them to control the outcome of an election. But nowhere does Raymond attempt anything so grand as trying to "rig" an election. As the New Hampshire episode demonstrates, he tended to be more nuisance than genius and utterly lacked the ability to get away with his capers. In reality, Raymond was a sometimes competent, midlevel functionary, and nothing more, who was regularly pushed aside by the party's true elites.

To his credit, Raymond is perfectly candid about this aspect of his career. He never hesitates to turn the jaded eye inward or admit embarrassing facts. To the extent that his book gets any attention, the focus undoubtedly will be on the dirty tricks. They're fun to read about—and, yes, wrong to have committed—but their actual effect on the political process, here as in other cases, is almost always exaggerated. (And who cares about a bunch of long-forgotten state races in New Jersey?) What is more broadly revealing, and ultimately more interesting, are the glimpses of everyday life as a Republican operative that form the connective tissue between all the bad acts. Especially for someone in the same field—albeit, in my case, from a different angle—reading about the dull grind of a hopeless campaign, the intense pressure always to be hustling for the next job, and the continual struggle to climb the greasy pole

What separates this memoir from others is that Raymond, fresh from a jail stint, holds no illusion of having a future in politics and seems refreshingly disinclined to try to convince us that he has been somehow misunderstood.

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with some of the most ruthless people on the planet provides an entrée into a part of politics that, even to relative insiders, usually remains hidden.

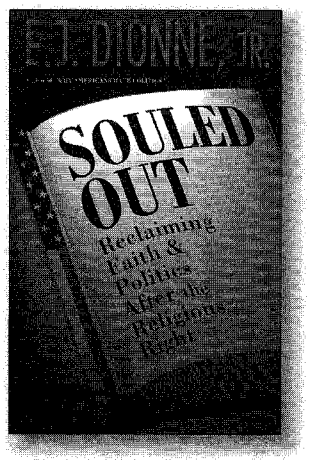
Raymond still clings to a few thin reeds of his old life, such as the tough-guy image, manifested here as a world-weary, Dashiell Hammett authorial voice that sometimes grates, but usually manages to capture quite well the punishing succession of pressures and small defeats that comprised his life as an operative. Take his initial encounter with Rove, who appears just as Raymond has finished delivering a direct-mail pitch to an Illinois Senate candidate, and promptly cuts him off at the knees without giving it a thought: "As if guided by the same primordial, threat-sensing ESP that sends animals running for high ground before the rain ever comes, Rove came slouching into the boardroom almost as soon as I took the packet from my briefcase." Has there been a better description of Rove?

It's this kind of humor and candor that eventually earns the book a grudging respect (mine, anyway) despite all the treachery and cynicism and dirty tricks. When the feds move in to investigate the phone-jamming project, Raymond's higher-ups at the Republican National Committee decide to cut him loose. In the end, he's a nobody—and *somebody* has to take the fall. (By contrast, Jim Tobin, an RNC official under whose auspices Raymond worked in New Hampshire, was provided millions of dollars' worth of legal representation by the RNC.) Left to fend for himself, he becomes "senior vice president of keeping my ass out of prison" and, as with so much else, fails at this, too.

While Raymond wouldn't be anyone's pick to lead a Cub Scout troop, the fate that has befallen him feels slightly unjust. With the flood of corruption sweeping through Republican Washington these past few years, it seems somehow wrong that he is one of only a few to have seen the inside of a jail cell. Every day seems to bring new evidence that his behavior was not so far from the mean. And who else has offered a public accounting of their behavior that's anywhere near as comprehensive and damning as *How to Rig an Election*?

I suspect this karmic imbalance won't last long. Raymond has a nice riff on the rubber Jesus bracelets that evidently were in vogue for a time at RNC headquarters. He notes acidly that "none of the top men or women in the RNC ever asked themselves what Jesus would do until after they got caught doing things he would never have done." And, indeed, Republican scandals continue to blossom—among them, incredibly, another Republican phone-banking scandal in New Hampshire (this one smearing Mitt Romney's Mormonism), which has again drawn the interest of the feds. Raymond may be a turncoat and an outcast, but it's a safe bet that he will soon be in the company of his fellow Republicans once again—if not among those who decide to publish their memoirs, then certainly among the growing ranks of felons. WM

Joshua Green is a senior editor at the *Atlantic* and a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly*.



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E. J. Dionne Jr.

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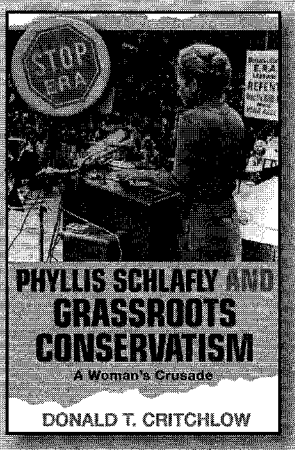

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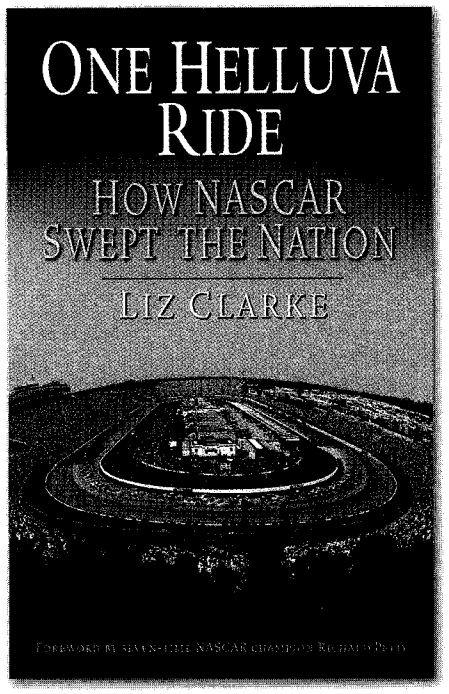
The selling of NASCAR

By Jamie Malanowski



One Helluva Ride: How NASCAR Swept the Nation

by Liz Clarke
Villard, 320 pp.

"A full moon rose over the backstretch of Charlotte Motor Speedway the night of NASCAR's 1992 all-star race ..." is the rather melodramatic way Liz Clarke begins the first line of the first paragraph of the first chapter of *One Helluva Ride: How NASCAR Swept the Nation*. The good news is that this hoary lunar invocation does not deliver on the bats and werewolves it augurs. Instead, we get a good story, often well told. More than fifteen years of covering NASCAR (and other sports) for the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and other newspapers has given Clarke a close and personal knowledge of the drivers and other participants in NASCAR, and she has acquired a privileged perspective on the sport's growth from a rustic diversion featuring colorful fellows named Red and Buck and Fireball to a major pop-cultural phenomenon. Clarke has written a good book about this transformation—although, truth be told, she has written a book good enough to make me wish it were a better one.

NASCAR—which stands for the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, but the CAR part pretty much says it all—got its start in 1947 when Bill France, the mechanic-owner of a track in Daytona, Florida, confederated with track owners in Martinsville, Virginia, North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, Darlington, South Carolina, and other small towns whose mellifluous names cannot be spoken without conjuring up the aroma of motor oil. The growth of motor sports, as Clarke points out, was part of a general postwar boom. But what manifested itself as drag racing in the big flat stretches of the Southwest became stock racing in the dry counties of the Deep South. There the indigenous moonshine-running industry fostered the careers of ambitious young men, whose ability to outrun police cruisers at high speeds over tight twisty roads found a more sporting expression at Talladega and other tracks.

From that beginning NASCAR grew into a popular niche sport, occasionally showcased on *Wide World of Sports*, stunted by the inferiority complex it felt before the more professional and sophisticated (read: international) practitioners of Indy-style racing, and enriched by the personalities of the drivers, especially the showmanship of the brilliant Richard Petty (who, lauding NASCAR's spirit of teamwork in his introduction to *One Helluva Ride*, pricelessly avers, "There's no *I* in racing"). There the sport might have stayed, lumped with the roughnecks of the National Hockey League below baseball and football and basketball but above track, boxing, competitive cliff diving, and the numerous other competitions that populate the sporting landscape, except for a blizzard that socked in the East Coast in 1979 during the running of the Daytona 500, the most prestigious race on the NASCAR calendar. The race was televised nationally, and a lot of people who would ordinarily do anything but watch racing saw a thriller, in which three of the biggest names in the sport—Petty, Donnie Allison, and Cale Yarborough—vied for the lead until the last lap, when Allison and Yarborough collided and the King went from third to first as he crossed the finish line. Like the NFL's 1958 championship game, in which the Baltimore Colts defeated the New York Giants in sudden-death overtime before a national TV audience, the contest became a dividing line in the history of the sport, the cornerstone of a new era.

NASCAR is a funny sport, in that the occasional fan sees cars, but the devotee sees drivers. "Once I came to know the driver," says Clarke, "it was if his car suddenly took on his characteristics." She would see the pursuit of the No. 43 car and recognize the determined professionalism of the late-career Petty, or the pinballing No. 23 Ford and

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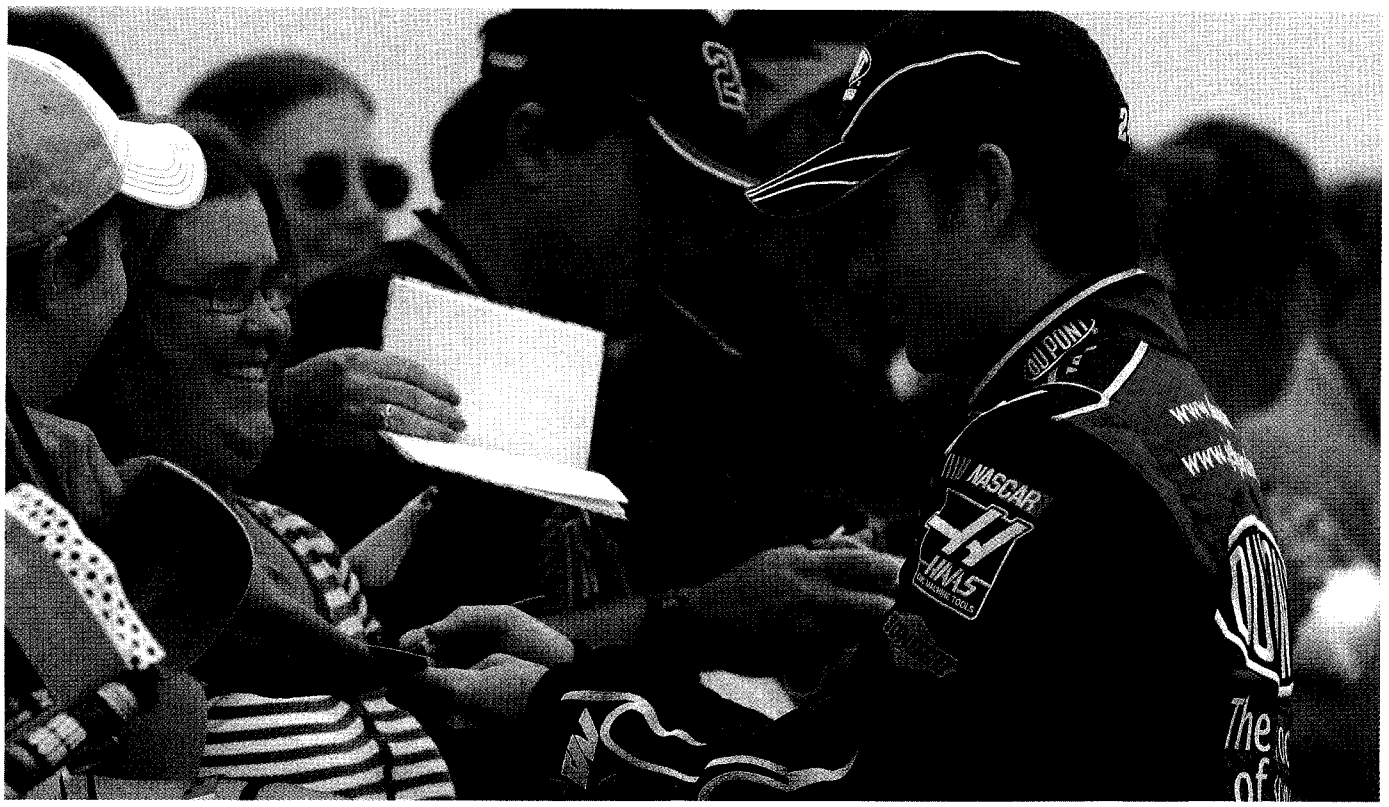

Pretty boy: NASCAR driver Jeff Gordon signs an autograph for an adoring fan.

identify the kinetic Jimmy Spencer, or the lurking No. 3 and see the menacing Dale Earnhardt. With engines close to standardized and technical innovations treated suspiciously, driving ability is paramount. (In one of the book's more memorable scenes, Clarke takes a spin on a track with driver Mike Martin, and conveys her amazement at the ceaseless motion of his hands and legs as he steers, shifts, speeds up, and brakes.) Once the sport was able to adopt state-of-the-art marketing and promotion techniques and put them in the service of drivers—most notably the dark, intimidating Earnhardt and the shiny, polished Jeff Gordon, of whom one driver groused to Clarke, "He shouldn't be allowed to be that young, that talented, that experienced, and that good-looking"—the sport took off. These were two very gifted athletes with two very distinct and sellable images, and Clarke is particularly good in showing that Earnhardt, always the savvy businessman, inflamed the rivalry with Gordon, contrasting his own mean, tough, up-from-the-hardscrabble image with that of the handsome, milk-drinking Gordon, while sharing business relationships that profited them both. After covering Earnhardt for many years, Clarke had developed a warm relationship with him; the chapter on his fatal accident in 2001, which skillfully manages to bridge her personal reaction, a journalistic account of the events, and an analysis of the impact, is the virtual centerpiece of the book.

By emphasizing personalities over competition—there's not so much here about that classic Winston 500, where Billy Joe passed Jim Bob so that Bubba could whatever—the helluva ride that Clarke takes us on is the sport's development from its red-clay rebel roots to a megabusiness that has a fifth of the Fortune 500 advertising on its hoods, gives media training to its racers, and aims to build a global brand. Clarke is deft at pointing out the particular discontents that come from this kind of growth: the rise and fall of pretty, poised Miss Winston, for example, or the fierce falling out of Earnhardt's widow and son. Clarke lets herself get a little maudlin when discussing the closing of the old, fairly dilapidated North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, track, the sort of rustic place where the soul of the sport first breathed life but which had become too minor league to host a modern NASCAR race. She makes up for that by noting with a gimlet eye how the image-conscious NASCAR high command eagerly and rather Milo Minderbinderishly cooperated with Will Ferrell in the making the film *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*, which ridiculed the sport and the people in it but somehow also promoted the brand. ("I found it gut-wrenchingly funny," said NASCAR chief Brian France, and then quickly pointed out how an earlier Ferrell movie, *Anchorman*, had satirized journalists like Clarke herself.) In an almost surreal passage, Clarke discusses NASCAR's partnership with the book publisher Harlequin Enterprises, which has published numerous NASCAR-themed romance novels. The Harlequin NASCAR launch was celebrated by a speed-dating event at the Daytona 500, presided over by hunky bachelor driver Carl Edwards. Does such a naked and successful cross-promotion make testosterone-rich enterprises like Major League Baseball and the NFL feel icky, or envious?

But in one respect, NASCAR has yet to begin to grow, and how the sport navigates future challenges may be the most interesting story of all. Like many sports, NASCAR wants to go global, but unlike baseball

Jason Smith/Stringer/Getty Images for NASCAR

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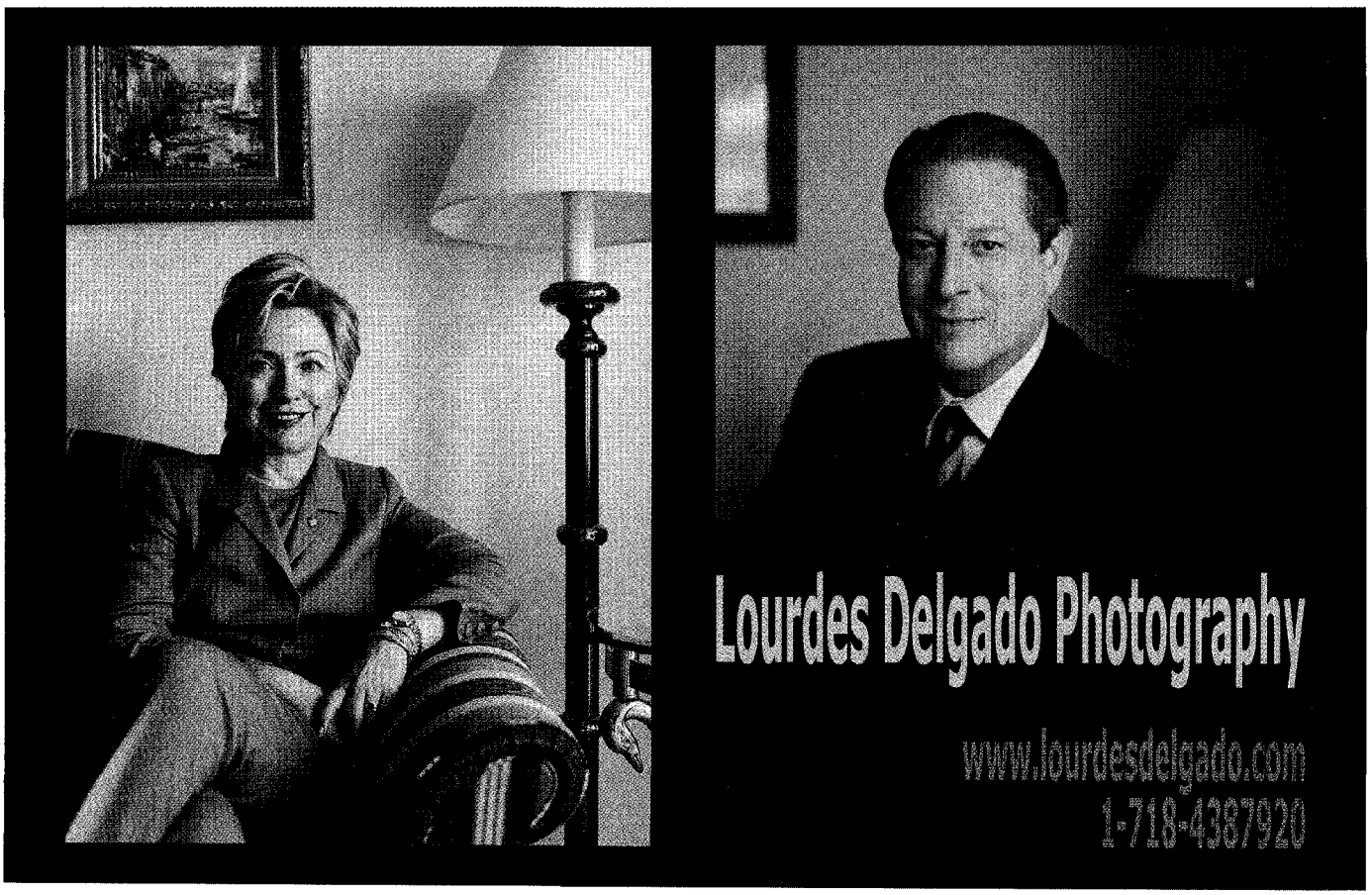
or basketball, where the simple hassles of traveling seem to be the biggest impediment, NASCAR has special problems. For a long time, Toyota wanted to get into the sport, but NASCAR's bylaws required competing cars be American made. Once, however, Chrysler was sold to Daimler, Dodge, one of the pillars of the sport, was suddenly a German company. In a great scene, Clarke tells how NASCAR's former president met with Toyota: "Y'all are welcome to come and compete ... and you're welcome to win," he said. Then, with his index finger and thumb no more than a centimeter apart, he added, "But only by *this* much." By 2007, with the Ford Fusion being made in Mexico and the Chevy Monte Carlo and the Dodge Charger being made in Canada, the Toyota Camry was the only car in NASCAR's top ranks that was actually made in the United States. As in so many sectors of the economy, globalization sits more easily with the corporate elites than with the rank-and-file. A question in a poll taken for the *Charlotte Observer* in September 2007 asked readers how they felt about stock-car racing "going global." Of the more than 7,000 people who responded, 17 percent checked "It's great. Fresh talent might make for better racing"; 32 percent checked "Don't care—let's race"; and 54 percent checked "It's wrong and it troubles me." When columnist Charles Walker wrote, "Who wants to say 'Our American hot rod got whipped by a rice rocket?'" 80 percent of the polled readers supported him.

It's kind of interesting how NASCAR's development was profoundly but indirectly influenced by political developments. Prohibition led to moonshine running, which created NASCAR's first talent pool; the federal ban on tobacco advertising on TV led to a huge investment in NASCAR by Big Tobacco that boosted the sport's profile and professional stature; the later federal limits on tobacco promotion opened the doors for NASCAR to shed its no longer politically correct association with smoking and bring in richer sponsors with bigger upsides.

One political issue Clarke does not consider at length is racism. She discusses the sad story of Wendell Scott, who was a well-respected driver who never had access to the best cars, and to date is the only African American to win a major NASCAR race. She does not, however, explore how a historically southern sport with predominantly white drivers attracted an enormous, mostly white fan base around the start of the Reagan 1980s, just when black athletes began passing through the doors that legislation and courts had opened, and were beginning to attain a majority presence on most basketball and football teams at the college and professional level. It's probably coincidence.

It's a sweeping story Liz Clarke has here—from the rural roots to the challenge of globalization, full of rivalries, love, hate, colorful characters, and tragedy. There's sufficient drama here that one wishes for a little more thunder from her prose. On the other hand, a new season of NASCAR is starting, and the engines will be thunderous enough. WM

Jamie Malanowski is managing editor of *Playboy* magazine. His most recent book is *The Coup*, a satirical novel about Washington, D.C.



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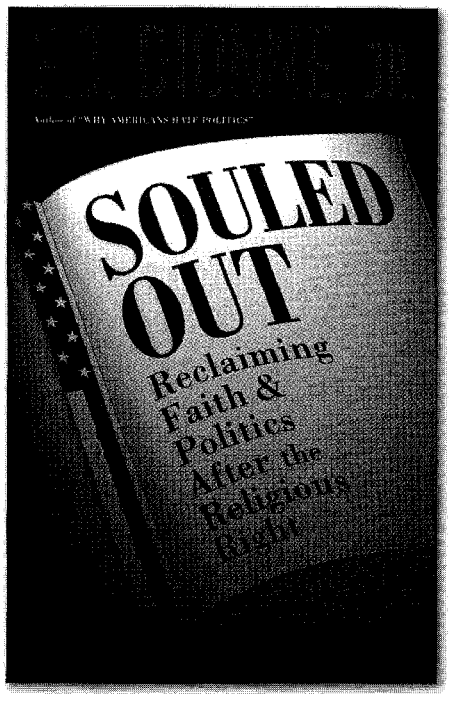
Downfall



Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics After the Religious Right

by E. J. Dionne Jr.
Princeton University Press, 256 pp.

E. J. Dionne says that the era of the religious right is finally over.

By Steven Waldman

In the last few years we've seen the birth of a new book genre: the Religious Left Political Testimonial. The common theme of these books is that politics has been warped by the dominance of the religious right and the "secular left." The authors describe how their personal commitment to progressive politics was shaped by religion and remind us of the role that religion played in the great progressive movements of the past.

Of late, we've seen a variant of this argument made by a number of writers: *Sojourners* editor Jim Wallis (*God's Politics*, *The Great Awakening*); former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (*Failing America's Faithful*); *NewsHour*'s Ray Suarez (*The Holy Vote*); *Tikkun*'s Michael Lerner (*The Left Hand of God*); former *Washington Monthly* editor Amy Sullivan (*The Party Faithful*, reviewed on p. 61 in this issue); and political analyst E. J. Dionne Jr. (*Souled Out*).

This approach has now become the de facto position of the Democratic Party. Behold the stark difference in approaches between the current candidates and John Kerry, who declared, JFK-like, that his faith wouldn't influence his policies, while Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have said that, on the contrary, faith powerfully fuels their progressive approach.

Perhaps some of this is just political calculation. The candidates and their handlers may have concluded that appearing indifferent to religion is foolish in a country in which more than 90 percent of the voters say they believe in God. But if all that comes of this new consciousness is that Democratic speechwriters now remember to put "INSERT BIBLE QUOTE HERE" in their speech drafts, not much will have been gained. There needs to be some actual thought given to what religion *really* teaches about our obligations to our neighbors, human nature, and other factors that shape policy.

That's where Dionne's book really shines. In addition to being able to dissect exit polls with the best of them, Dionne is also a student of theology. Writing as a believing Catholic as well as a political pundit, he explains how Catholic doctrine has shaped his own approach to politics and policy.

Dionne makes the obvious point (still worth noting) that Jesus was an anti-establishment figure who admonished his followers to serve the poor and said nothing about abortion or homosexuality. He also notes that many of the issues that drove conservative religious Americans into the Republican Party were suspiciously unrelated to faith: racial integration, crime, taxes, and other nonreligious aspects of liberalism. (I'd add: one of the key issues that prompted the birth of the Moral Majority was Jimmy Carter's support of the Panama Canal treaty; it's hard to see how keeping the waterway in American hands would have been at the top of Jesus's to-do list.)

Harmful as the religious right has been, Dionne argues, the "secular left" has made matters worse by overreacting. By secular left he means that portion of the electorate that combines support for a strict separation of church and state with a detectable contempt for religion or religious people. Members of the secular left view political invocations of God as a sign of looming theocracy and are hostile to declarations of faith in public. Though not dominant even among the liberal elite, they are numerous enough to put books like Christopher Hitchens's *God Is Not Great* on the bestseller list and to provoke Democratic leaders into awkward and damaging displays of

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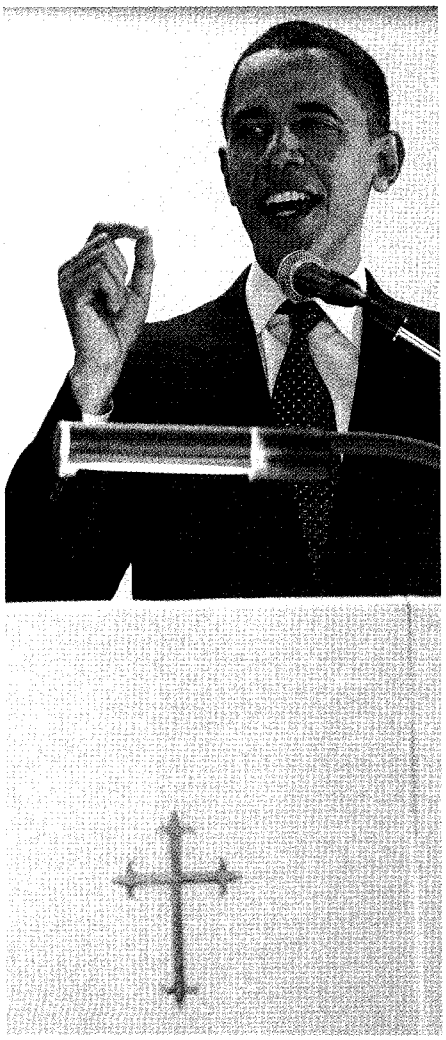

Ethan Miller/Staff/Getty Images

political correctness. My favorite example was when John Kerry, a devout Catholic himself, said during his 2004 acceptance speech that he "welcomed" people of faith into the party, as if it were an act of magnanimity to a small minority.

"One of liberalism's great achievements has been its resolute opposition to bigotry," Dionne writes. "Bigotry against people of faith is not only ugly; it is inconsistent with the liberal creed." But just as the old religious right leadership has shown itself this campaign season to be past its prime, so too the secular left seems to have lost some clout—or at least to have made a tactical decision to stop complaining when Democratic politicians invoke God. They mutter under their breaths that it's stupid, but they accept that politically it's better for the Democrats if they sound "faithier."

If in fact the religious left is back inside the tent of Democratic politics, that is very good news for the progressive cause, if history is any guide. As Dionne explains, the great social justice movements of the past two centuries were all powerfully fueled by people of faith motivated by a biblically inspired concern for social justice and the poor. He also notes that Jesus was all about confronting the powers-that-be: "It is impossible to see Jesus as a tool of the establishment."

Okay, religious progressives care for the little guy. So far it just sounds like there's a remarkable similarity between their concerns and the Democratic Party platform of the last few decades. Does religious tradition offer anything that an orthodox secular liberal wouldn't say?

Yes, says Dionne. If you look at either the Bible or the history of social movements, you'll find that the religious voice invariably has combined a concern for the poor with a strong commitment to personal responsibility. "This connection was visible not only in the Prohibition movement, but also in the early trade-union movement, which put heavy emphasis on education and self-help, even as it preached organizing and solidarity. It was powerfully present in the civil rights movement." These were movements that placed demands on both society at large *and* the individuals within it. Poverty, he says, will not be addressed unless society deals with both racism and structural problems *and* single parenthood and family breakdown. At their best, religious leaders don't urge us merely to lift up the poor, but also to fight the causes of poverty, be they economic forces or the weaknesses of human nature to which all of us are prey. It is this biblically based moralism that allows religious progressives to condemn the self-destructive behaviors that lead to family dysfunction and poverty without seeming to be "blaming the victim." It's a moralism that secular liberals of the 1970s and '80s rejected, but that FDR was perfectly comfortable with and that New Democrats have tried, with much success, to reinject into their party.

Another area where faith takes religious liberals in a different direction than secular liberals is abortion. While religious lefties such as Jim Wallis avoid involvement with the conservative anti-abortion movement, they speak openly of abortion as something to be avoided and take seriously the goal of reducing the abortion rate. This has made pro-choice activists uncomfortable. One of the most interesting moments for the Democratic Party will be when the nominee decides whether to have an abortion-reduction strategy along with a pro-choice position.

Dionne offers a particularly shrewd analysis of the religious holes in the GOP platform. It's not just that conservative Republicans mouth platitudes about compassion for the poor while doing little to help them—a point even now being made by some of their own leaders, like Mike Huckabee. It's also that they refuse to admit the obvious conflicts between Christian doctrine and their belief in unfettered free markets. By contrast, Dionne points out, conservative Catholics like Pope Benedict and Pope John Paul II combined their social conservatism with an extremely progressive view of how markets needed to be tamed for the social good (leading them to support, for instance, trade unions around the world).

I have only a few minor quibbles with Dionne's book. The first is a historic point. Dionne says that American liberalism was always more pluralistic because we did not experience the religious wars of Europe. In fact, Americans became pluralistic because they did experience religious conflict, not in Europe but in the colonies. Prior to the drafting of the Constitution, most American colonies had official religions and persecuted their religious minorities—for example, imprisoning Baptists and Quakers for heresy. The colonists viewed religious liberty as the freedom of their sect to dominate others. It was because this system worked so badly that the Founders rejected the approach of their ancestors and embraced pluralism.

Moreover, Dionne gives insufficient attention to some of the tensions within liberalism that will eventually result from an energized religious left. While Republicans certainly led the way in

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The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right
Adam Clymer

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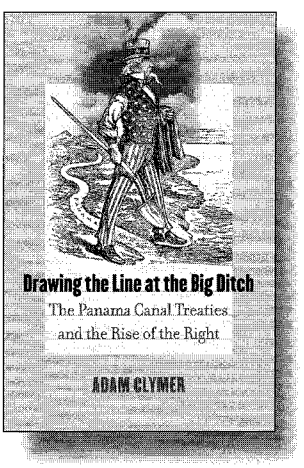
304 pages, 20 photographs, Cloth $29.95



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downplaying the importance of poverty as an issue, the Democrats followed suit by deciding that elections were all about winning the middle class. Only John Edwards elevated poverty as a central concern, and you can see where that got him. Will religious leaders on the left really criticize Democrats for paying insufficient attention to the poor?

Progressives must also grapple with the fact that within the Democratic Party, some religious leaders are the main opponents of gay rights; you can see this in not only liberal Catholic bishops but also many African American and Latino clergy. The Iraq War and the sinking economy have somewhat obscured this division, but it still persists just below the surface.

These are, however, minor complaints. *Souled Out* is consistently engaging, learned, and persuasive. Charmingly, Dionne ties it all together not with a recitation of Dorothy Day or Reinhold Niebuhr but Frank Capra and *It's a Wonderful Life*. That movie, he writes, far from being merely sentimental, actually captured the full mix of American values:

"Americans are deeply egalitarian but also believe in upward mobility and the value of owning property." (Hence the hero George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, owns a savings-and-loan.)

"Americans love family values but dislike harsh condemnations of those who may fail in their efforts to live up to them." (Bailey risks scandal by lending money to a "bad girl.")

"Capitalists can be good, but only if they recognize moral limits—the social mortgage on their wealth." (George Bailey becomes beloved, after all, not through charity but through lending people money so they can help themselves. He was a microlender, not a welfare program.)

Any book that treats *It's a Wonderful Life* as theologically significant is to be read carefully—especially when it draws such shrewd lessons in the process. WM

Steven Waldman is editor in chief of Beliefnet.com and a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly*. He is most recently the author of *Founding Faith: Politics, Providence, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America.*

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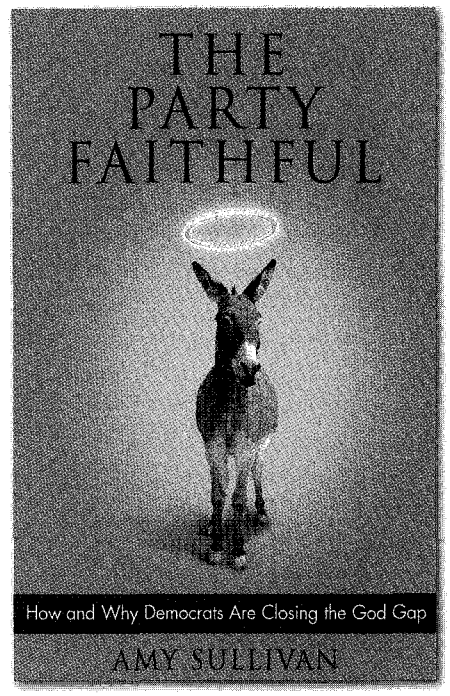
Ascension

Amy Sullivan says that the era of the religious left has begun.

By Paul Baumann



The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the God Gap

by Amy Sullivan
Scribner, 288 pp.

It is widely bruited about these days that the once storybook marriage between the religious right and the Republican Party is troubled. Rumor has it that evangelical Christians and conservative Catholics have even been seen flirting with that most disreputable of suitors, the Democratic Party. The 2006 election of Senator Bob Casey in Pennsylvania and Governor Bill Ritter in Colorado, both pro-life Catholic Democrats, lends credence to these rumors, as does the brief panic felt by the Republican establishment over the presidential candidacy of Mike Huckabee. Indeed, speculation about the impending breakup got so intense last year that the ever-hopeful *New York Times Magazine* gave writer David D. Kirkpatrick the cover and 8,000 words in October to expatiate on "The Evangelical Crackup." Kirkpatrick quoted Marvin Olasky, a movement conservative and an evangelical, on the disillusionment felt by evangelicals toward President Bush and the GOP. "To some extent—we have to see how much—the Republicans have blown it," Olasky said. "That opportunity to lock up that constituency has vanished. The ball now really is in the Democrats' court."

Amy Sullivan agrees. Sullivan, nation editor at *Time* magazine (also a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly*), and an evangelical herself, reminds her readers, in *The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the God Gap*, that 40 percent of what many Democrats think of as a monolithically right-wing evangelical movement describe themselves as political moderates. On questions of poverty and economic inequality, corporate malfeasance, access to health care, fair trade, and the environment, they reject the business-comes-first policies of the Republican Party. Yet skillful Republican manipulation of culture-war issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage—abetted by Democratic denigration of "values" voters—has driven these moderate evangelicals (and Catholics) into the Republican fold. In *The Party Faithful*, Sullivan argues that many have tired of the relentless antagonisms and divisive politics surrounding abortion, the culture wars, and Bush's messianic foreign policy—and that when Democrats make the effort to actually listen to and engage moderate evangelicals and Catholics, they can win over enough of them to significantly change the electoral map.

Sullivan makes clear that ignoring such voters, as the party has done for the last forty years, has proven a recipe for political decline and electoral defeat. The story includes Jimmy Carter, whose frank talk about faith got him half the evangelical vote in 1976, and who went on to pursue policies on issues like abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment that outraged his evangelical base, creating an opportunity the Republican Party shrewdly exploited. As Sullivan observes, "the idea of organizing evangelicals into a conservative political force was the brainchild of a group of mostly secular New Right activists who saw conservative Christians as 'the greatest tract of virgin timber on the political landscape.'"

Bill Clinton, with his instinctive feel for religious gesture and his command of the evangelical idiom, remains the exception that proves the rule about the Democrats. Clinton, Sullivan argues, knew that Democrats had to appeal to religious voters, but "could never convince his party." Sullivan's admiration for Clinton extends to a willingness to accept his protestations of contrition over the Monica Lewinsky scandal; and she is perplexed that the adulteries and lies of Clinton's Republican accusers never elicited the same outrage that his transgressions did. It is a fair point, but one that ignores the

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peculiar psychological intimacy between a president and the American people, an intimacy that helps to explain the wide swings between admiration and disillusionment that so many presidents evoke in us.

In chronicling the Democratic Party's decades-long neglect of what she insists are millions of politically persuadable evangelicals and Catholics, Sullivan dangles the tantalizing prospect of a resounding Democratic victory in this year's presidential and congressional races, one that would recapture a pivotal slice of the religious vote. That victory, she argues, is there for the taking—if only Democrats (especially party activists and leaders) will stop going out of their way to alienate voters who possess strong religious convictions. The simple truth Democrats need to grasp is that for many Americans, religion, as Sullivan rightly notes, is "a proxy for a general moral worldview." Republicans have long understood this fact of political life, and have tailored their campaigns accordingly. "Talking about faith—or, broadly, about the values that underlie issues," Sullivan writes, "gives voters insight into what motivates the men and women who ask for their support." Consequently, it is usually a mistake for Democrats to emphasize what they plan to do, rather than what they believe in.

When Democrats make the effort to actually listen to and engage moderate evangelicals and Catholics, they can win over enough of them to significantly change the electoral map.

Raised in the richly emotional world of a Baptist church in Michigan, later a member of Senator Tom Daschle's staff (she also did a stint with the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life), Sullivan is well qualified to report from the crossroads of faith and politics. Her understanding of the Bible's demand that Christians care for the poor, the hungry, and the needy forms the foundation of her liberal conviction that government must help those who cannot help themselves. And her firsthand knowledge of the communitarian ethos that characterizes evangelical culture animates her sharp critique of those who would write off tens of millions of potential Democratic voters. On this front, Sullivan remains hopeful, even as she worries that old habits will die hard among many secular liberals and Democratic Party activists, whose contempt for religion and religious believers is exceeded only by their ignorance about both.

The Party Faithful is rich in anecdote and, for the most part, incisive in analysis. Just how ignorant have the Democratic Party's movers and shakers been about the nation's millions of evangelicals? Sullivan tells the story of Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe being introduced to megachurch pastor Rick Warren, one of the three or four best-known evangelicals in the country and author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, a colossal best seller. "Nice to meet you, Rick," McAuliffe is reported to have said. "And what do you do?" (It is unlikely McAuliffe would make that mistake today: for two years in a row, Warren has invited Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, respectively, to speak at the annual AIDS summit at his church. Both accepted with alacrity, with Clinton winning a standing ovation from the conservative audience.)

Still, Democrats have much catching up to do to overcome the "religion gap" that has given Republicans such a decisive edge with churchgoing voters—a group that comprises much of the small but crucial swing vote in midwestern states such as Ohio and Michigan. In this regard, the John Kerry presidential campaign in 2004 was utterly clueless about what Sullivan rightly calls the "seismic political, cultural, and religious changes" that had taken place since John F. Kennedy faced down those querulous Protestant ministers in Houston in 1960. "The Kennedy 'religion is private' formulation [is] no longer operative," Sullivan writes. For better and worse, she is right.

Sullivan uses many stories to drive home this point, among them that of Mara Vanderslice, an evangelical who ran Kerry's religious outreach operation. Vanderslice's hopelessly under-resourced operation was ridiculed or dismissed by other Kerry staffers, and her advice to the candidate ignored. In the final days of the campaign, however, she was sent to lend a hand in Michigan, and found a sympathetic listener in Donnie Fowler, the director of Kerry's campaign there. "Fowler knew the campaign would have to do something to change the candidate's image as a 'bad' Catholic," Sullivan writes. Given some backing at last, Vanderslice was able to change the way the campaign explained Kerry's position on abortion, emphasizing the need for lower abortion rates and concern for the "common good." Cleverly, she also recruited a group of nuns to canvass key neighborhoods. These tactics worked, apparently, as Kerry went on to fare much better among weekly-mass-attending Catholics in Michigan—a full fifteen points higher, in fact—than he did in Ohio and Pennsylvania, states with similar Catholic populations.

Noting that the current Democratic candidates for president have put together sophisticated outreach organizations to religious groups, Sullivan is hopeful that the party has finally gotten the message. Evangelical identification with the Republican Party, meanwhile, has slipped from roughly 50 percent in 2004 to 40 percent in 2007. And some prominent pastors have embraced what can only be called a progressive social-justice agenda similar to that of the Democrats. Still, Sullivan warns, "influential segments of the Democratic Party remain either conflicted about or opposed to efforts to court religious voters."

Abortion is an especially difficult issue for Democrats, who have tied the party so closely to the fate of *Roe v. Wade*. Sullivan laments the fierce opposition of traditional Democratic Party fund-raisers to supporting candidates who are pro-life, and criticizes those who resist both the policies and the moral exhortation needed to lower abortion rates and to persuade religious voters that Democrats understand their qualms about current abortion practice. Bill Clinton's politically astute formulation that abortion should be "safe,

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legal, and rare" earns Sullivan's enthusiastic approbation, as do Democrats Casey in Pennsylvania, Ritter in Colorado, and Ted Strickland in Ohio, all presented as models of how to take "abortion off the table" as a liability for Democrats. "By reducing abortion rates through prevention, not restriction or criminalization," Sullivan contends, the astute Democrat can "let his faith inform his politics without imposing his beliefs on citizens."

There is much to admire in this clearly written, carefully argued, and ultimately rather personal book. Sullivan seems to have an encyclopedic knowledge of recent Democratic Party history, and is clearly a person of strong convictions. Her indictment of John Kerry's maladroit explanations about his faith and his campaign's disastrous bungles with religious groups is as unfailing as her approval of Bill Clinton. She evinces an eloquent admiration for Jim Wallis and the Sojourners community, and for those liberal Democratic political consultants, such as Common Ground Strategies, who specialize in tutoring candidates about, and managing outreach to, religious groups.

I detected only a few missteps. Martin Marty, the distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Chicago, is a historian of religion, not a sociologist. And only if you live inside the Beltway would you think that on economic issues "Catholic intellectual thought [has been] taken over by neoconservatives such as Michael Novak and George Weigel." (I suspect that not even Novak and Weigel think that.) But Sullivan is right to describe William Donohue, the self-appointed head of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, as "widely considered a loud-mouth kook by other Catholics." And I was intrigued and amused to learn that the horror-movie director Wes Craven (*Scream*) is a graduate of Wheaton College, widely known as the evangelicals' Harvard, a school, Sullivan notes, that refused to rent its auditorium to John F. Kennedy during the 1960 presidential campaign because he was Catholic.

Sullivan opens her concluding chapter, "A Level Playing Field," with an upbeat description of last June's presidential "faith forum," sponsored by Sojourners, at George Washington University, where the Democratic candidates were quizzed about the role of faith in their politics and lives. There were plenty of what, at least to this reader, seemed like cringe-making moments: John Edwards was asked about "the biggest sin you've ever committed," while Senator Hillary Clinton was queried as to how her faith helped her deal with "infidelity in your marriage." But Sullivan gives the candidates high marks for how they responded, and judges the event a watershed moment in the Democratic Party's effort to connect with religious voters. As an evangelical, she is perhaps more comfortable with this sort of public "testimony" than am I, a somewhat repressed Catholic still trying to get used to the idea of shaking the hand of the stranger standing next to me in the pew.

Nor, I must confess, am I as convinced as Sullivan appears to be that such public avowals of religiosity represent real progress for our politics. Sullivan is right about the heedlessness with which the Democratic Party has alienated Catholics and evangelicals, and her hands-on prescriptions for how to rectify this history make good sense. Yet notwithstanding the handful of Democratic victories where religious outreach appears to have helped, the truth is that issues such as the economy, national security, and even class and race remain decisive. E. J. Dionne makes this point in his new book, *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics After the Religious Right* (see Steven Waldman, "Downfall," p. 58). "[R]eligion's role in our politics should not be demeaned or ignored," he writes, "[but] it does religion no favors to exaggerate its influence or to see its hand at work when it is not." Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Dionne claims, religion and morality were not the determining factors in Bush's 2004 triumph. Similarly, it was Democratic gains among moderates, independents, and voters who were *less religious* that account for the swing away from the Republicans in 2006. "The gap between the more and less religious voters actually widened between 2004 and 2006," Dionne argues. In his view, Democrats "modestly cut their losses among more religious voters ... while at the same time vastly expanding their advantages in the rest of the electorate."

Although an inattentive reader might miss it, Sullivan is careful not to assert too much with respect to the impact of what Dionne calls "new organizing among voters of faith." She concedes that "all it proved was that in an extraordinary election year, some white evangelicals could switch their votes to Democratic candidates, just like members of every other group." Yet the tone and overarching argument of *The Party Faithful* imply something more dramatic about the role religion can play in future Democratic victories. Writing of this year's presidential candidates, Sullivan approvingly notes that their "sophisticated religious outreach was unprecedented in Democratic politics." The result, she argues, was that "the received wisdom that such a strategy would drive away the supposed secular base of the party had been shattered."

Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe was introduced to Rick Warren, one of the three or four best-known evangelicals in America. "And what do you do?" McAuliffe reportedly inquired.

It seems true that the willingness of the Democrats to talk about their religious faith has not, in fact, alienated the party's secular base. All things considered, however, that is a rather modest claim. Whether a rapprochement between Democrats and religiously inclined voters is likely or will eventually prove as decisive as Sullivan suggests is a much more disputable contention. This is one reader who hopes Sullivan is right, but who remains an agnostic. WM

Paul Baumann is editor of *Commonweal*.

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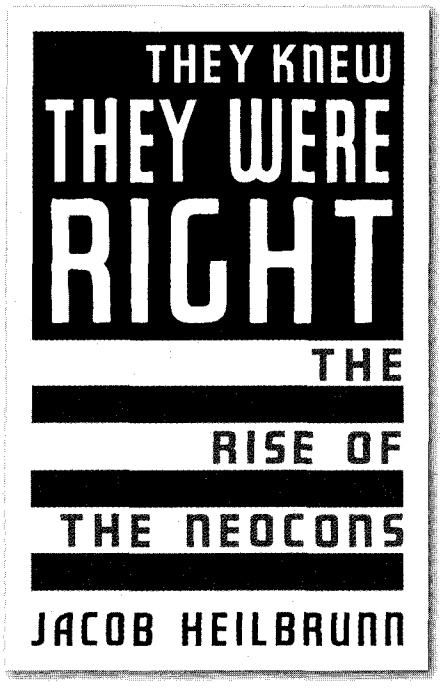
The Right Attitude



They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons
by Jacob Heilbrunn
Doubleday, 336 pp.

Over time, the neocons' ideology has morphed. But their temperament has remained fixed.

By Kevin Drum

What is a neocon? Do neocons, in fact, even exist? *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, who might himself be described as a kind of soft neocon—or is that an oxymoron?—tried his best to make light of the whole idea four years ago in a piece that mocked liberal notions of neocon influence on the Bush administration's foreign policy:

> *Theories about the tightly knit neocon cabal came in waves. One day you read that neocons were pushing plans to finish off Iraq and move into Syria ... Every day, it seemed,* Le Monde *or some deep-thinking German paper would have an exposé on the neocon cabal, complete with charts connecting all the conspirators ... The full-mooners fixated on a think tank called the Project for the New American Century, which has a staff of five and issues memos on foreign policy. To hear these people describe it, PNAC is sort of a Yiddish Trilateral Commission, the nexus of the sprawling neocon tentacles.*

Later, in the same column Brooks joked that the conspiracy theorists think "con is short for 'conservative' and neo is short for 'Jewish.'" Or, at least, he said it was a joke later, after critics pounced on him: "I was careful not to say that Bush or neocon critics are anti-Semitic," he backtracked.

As well he should have been. After all, the accusation that neoconservatism is primarily a Jewish phenomenon is a common one because—well, because an awful lot of neocons are Jewish. After all, the roll call of influential contemporary neocons usually starts with Paul Wolfowitz and Bill Kristol and then rolls ponderously through Richard Perle, Doug Feith, Elliott Abrams, and others before finishing up with Charles Krauthammer and Marty Peretz. Not to mention one David Brooks. That's a lot of Jewish names.

But wait! What about Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Patrick Moynihan? Or, among the current crop, Bill Bennett and Michael Novak? They aren't Jewish.

Which brings us to Jacob Heilbrunn and his recently published history of neoconservatism, *They Knew They Were Right*. Heilbrunn, who is himself Jewish and who once went through his own youthful flirtation with neoconservatism, doesn't shy away from diving directly into this most inflammatory of questions. No, Heilbrunn writes, not all neocons are Jewish, especially today, but there's no question where the roots of neoconservatism lie:

> *Despite the fervent protestations of its founders and adherents, then, it is anything but an anti-Semitic canard to label neoconservatism a largely Jewish movement. I hope it's clear, however, that I am talking about a cultural proclivity specific to American Jews of a certain generation, not about something that is "essentially" Jewish in either a religious or a racial sense. The best way to understand the phenomenon may be to focus on neoconservatism as an uneasy, controversial, and tempestuous drama of Jewish immigrant assimilation—a very American story. At bottom, it is about an unresolved civil war between a belligerent, upstart ethnic group*

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and a staid, cautious American foreign policy establishment that lost its way after the Vietnam war.

Not everyone will agree with that particular gloss, but the origins of what Norman Podhoretz calls the neoconservative "persuasion" are unquestionably rooted in the Jewish immigrant world of New York City in the 1930s, a story that Heilbrunn lays out in a near blur of detail that, at times unfortunately, characterizes the entire book. It centers on the City College of New York, where Trotskyites dueled obsessively across the cafeteria alcoves with Stalinists about nearly everything: the New Deal, the Spanish civil war, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a thousand arcane points of Marxist theory, and, of course, the future of the world. Always that. And always with no holds barred, no backsliding forgotten, and no allowances given. It was politics as intellectual street fight, where no slight was left unanswered and the only way to deal with an enemy was with a crushing blow.

Not all of these young Trotskyites went on to become neocons. In fact, only a few of them did. But in telling the story of the world in which they grew up, Heilbrunn is doing something more important than recounting dusty disputations between earnest Marxists: he's telling the story of the temperament behind them, a temperament that, in a way, is more important than any of the varying ideologies it has inspired along the way.

Heilbrunn chronicles the neocon temperament with both a historian's eye for the grand narrative and a reporter's eye for the telling detail, and in doing so he deftly exposes both neoconservatism's inherent contradictions as well as its inherent allure. In one revealing passage, for example, Heilbrunn makes clear the primacy of temperament over ideology in these young men (and they were mostly men) whose ideologies later turned out to be both so plastic and so influential. After World War II, with capitalism triumphant and the doctrinal disputes of 1930s-era socialism stale and irrelevant, what happened to these former Trotskyites? "They had always," Heilbrunn says, "been anti-Stalinist. Now, somewhat to their own surprise, they became anticommunists *tout court*."

But *how* did they become such fervent anticommunists? Heilbrunn can't say, probably because there isn't any *how*. Their conversion really did take them by surprise, and probably wasn't the result of much in the way of deep thinking. It just was. In fact, for a group of people famous as intellectuals, one of the most notable features of Heilbrunn's subjects is just how conventional they are. Socialism was popular in the 1930s, so they took up the banner of Trotskyite anti-Stalinism. Later they became "vital center" anticommunists, then anti-counterculture liberals, and later still antiterrorist conservatives. There's no real ideological underpinning to this journey, just a long series of reactions and reactions to reactions.

It wasn't until the 1970s, of course, that the Trotskyites-turned-cold-war-liberals became neocons. The switch that made them famous was the one that converted them from liberal critics of liberalism to conservative critics of liberalism, and the causes of that switch were varied. The initial spark, perhaps, was the left's turn against Israel after the 1967 war, with the harshest criticism coming from black nationalists who equated Zionism with racism. The fraying of Jewish-black relations came at the same time that the counterculture revolution of the late 1960s seemed to turn the world upside down, and the former radicals, it turned out, were appalled at the prospect. "It was in the defense of the Western tradition that the neocons became true conservatives," Heilbrunn says, though it took several years and a hapless Jimmy Carter presidency before the neocons finally gave up on liberalism entirely and cast their lot with Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party.

Until recently, this had been their high point. Neocons like Paul Wolfowitz, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and Richard Perle were influential for several years in the hawkish confines of the Reagan administration, though some of them later felt betrayed by Reagan's eventual rapprochement with Mikhail Gorbachev and his approval of the INF treaty in 1987. Then the collapse of the Iron Curtain, followed by the fall of the Soviet Union, removed their very raison d'être. It was at this point that Francis Fukuyama wrote his famously self-congratulatory essay, "The End of History?," which made the case not merely that the Soviet Union had fallen, but that Western liberalism had triumphed as a permanent, worldwide ideology—and that the neocons had been instrumental in that victory. This briefly bucked up their spirits, but there was still no escaping Fukuyama's essential message: They had won. There was no one left to fight. For a movement whose emotional center had always been defined more by opposition than by a positive program, this was a death knell.

Despite the catastrophic failure of Iraq, the neoconservatives have essentially taken over the GOP without a fight. It's hard to find more than a handful of Republicans who don't support the neocon agenda wholeheartedly.

The younger generation of neocons tried to pick up the pieces by remaking neoconservatism into a movement of muscular democracy promotion, but without a central enemy on which to focus their energies they found themselves unable to generate any traction. Saddam Hussein was the best they could do, and during the 1990s he just wasn't threatening enough to attract serious attention.

Later that changed, of course, and the end of this story is familiar: 9/11 offered up Islamic terrorism, and with it the war

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in Iraq, as a new focus for neocon energy. Having convinced themselves that they won the cold war, the neocons were now convinced that they also held the keys to defeating terrorism and remaking the Arab world. For a few years they were riding high once again, until it all came crashing down.

There are two prodigious ironies in all this. The first is that, as Heilbrunn says, the neocons, those stalwart defenders of muscular intervention and national greatness, "have quite possibly not only destroyed conservatism as a political force for years to come but also created an Iraq syndrome that tarnishes the idea of intervention for several decades." The second is that despite this catastrophic failure, the neocons have essentially taken over the Republican Party without a fight. The younger generation of neocons has long argued that, lacking their elders' epic transformation from liberal to conservative, they are really just conservatives, full stop. There's nothing "neo" about them. Today, with their grandest project in tatters, they finally seem to be right. Despite their failure, it's hard to find more than a tiny handful of Republicans who don't support the neocon agenda wholeheartedly. From John McCain's insistence on staying in Iraq forever to Rudy Giuliani's invocation of the "terrorists' war on us" to Mitt Romney's call to "double Gitmo," the neocon temperament is now, purely and simply, the conservative temperament. Israel, too, is now sacrosanct, even among Democrats—something that Heilbrunn argues must also be counted a neoconservative success.

Heilbrunn isn't sure what to make of this. "The lack of accountability," he says, "is, in fact, astonishing ... But so far, the neoconservatives have essentially gotten off scot-free." Partly this is because conservatives no longer have an alternative: as Heilbrunn notes elsewhere, there's no new generation of foreign policy realists to replace the Scowcrofts and the Bakers of the old guard. In the absence of competition, neoconservatism has taken over almost by default. Partly, though, it's because there was probably always less daylight between the neocons and the realists than either side thought. There are always easy cases, after all, when democracy promotion and national interest coincide, but outside of those cases, where the two collide, just how much democracy promotion has the neocon project really been responsible for? So far, practically none.

So perhaps it's time to put the term to bed. In the same way that past political sects (Free Soilers, progressives, neoliberals) have eventually been subsumed into mainstream parties and lost their separate identities, so too has neoconservatism all but taken over present-day conservatism. The neocon temperament, far from being the mark of an embattled minority, is now the heart and soul of the modern Republican Party. Like it or not, it's here to stay. WM

Kevin Drum is editor of the weblog Political Animal, and contributing writer for the *Washington Monthly.*

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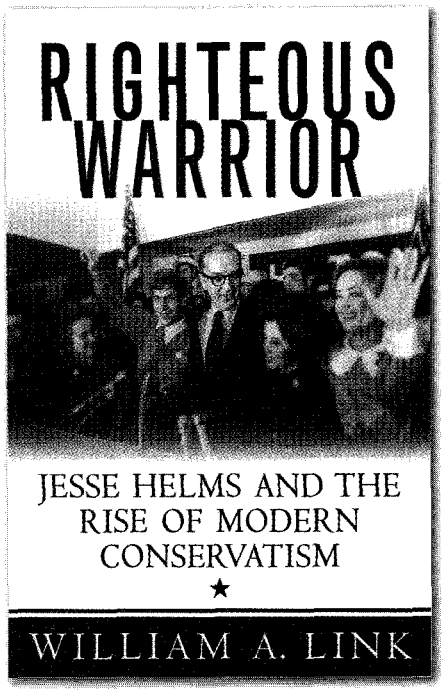
Tar Heel Pioneer

Name any Republican strategy of the past thirty years; chances are Jesse Helms got there first.

By Ed Kilgore



Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism

by William A. Link
St. Martin's Press, 482 pp.

For an astonishing thirty years, Jesse Helms embodied conservative extremism in the U.S. Senate and the Republican Party; even in his "mellow" final term, ending in 2003, his rare nod toward mainstream opinion served only to highlight the rest of his wildly reactionary views. But was he a political outlier, as his frequent battles with other Republicans—including conservative icon Ronald Reagan—seem to show, or a trendsetter?

William A. Link's scholarly biography of Helms, *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*, provides considerable ammunition for the latter view, as the subtitle indicates. If this excellent book has one weakness, it's that the author doesn't spend much time in explicit comparisons between Helms and his right-wing allies and successors. But after reading it, I have a hard time thinking of a major aspect of the modern right where Jesse didn't get there first, and with a flourish.

It's true that Helms wasn't the very first southern conservative Democrat to shift into the GOP because of opposition to civil rights. But he certainly was in the vanguard, and after winning his first Senate race in 1972 with strong support from his conservative Democratic base in the eastern part of North Carolina, he supervised a brisk conquest of the state GOP from its ancient moderate mountains-and-piedmont ownership.

A radio and TV commentator for more than a decade prior to his first run for office in 1972, Helms was unquestionably a pioneer in the media-heavy campaign methods that dominated U.S. politics by the end of the 1980s. Personal campaigning for him was a rarity, and often a sideshow. Given his background, it's interesting that Helms also created a template for conservative demonization of the "liberal media." One of the largely forgotten incidents Link discusses is Helms's brief 1985 campaign to engineer (in conjunction, ironically, with Ted Turner) a hostile takeover of CBS—an early effort to give conservatives a "fair and balanced" television network.

At the same time, Helms was also a key figure in the development of an ideologically motivated small-donor base for the conservative movement and the GOP. Much of Link's book is usefully devoted to Helm's uneasy but integral relationship with the North Carolina–based fund-raising machine the Congressional Club, which started life as a Helms vehicle employing the services of the Thomas Edison of right-wing direct mail, Richard Viguerie.

There are three areas in which Helms's model for other conservatives is better known but sometimes underestimated: culture-war "wedge" politics; legislative obstructionism in the Senate; and an antirealist, unilateralist foreign policy posture.

Helms was undoubtedly the living connection between the racial politics of the Old South and the religion-based cultural politics of the New Right. He was the one surviving segregationist of stature who never regretted or retracted his opposition to the major civil rights legislation of the 1960s. His career-long opposition to any national gesture commemorating the civil rights movement (most notably, his interminable and often scurrilous rearguard efforts to taint the memory of Martin Luther King Jr.) made his strident rhetoric against voting rights enforcement and anything approaching affirmative action an afterthought. And Helms's two reelection campaigns (in 1990 and 1996) against African American Democrat Harvey Gantt pivoted on explicit race baiting, as Helms's Congressional Club allies later admitted to Link.

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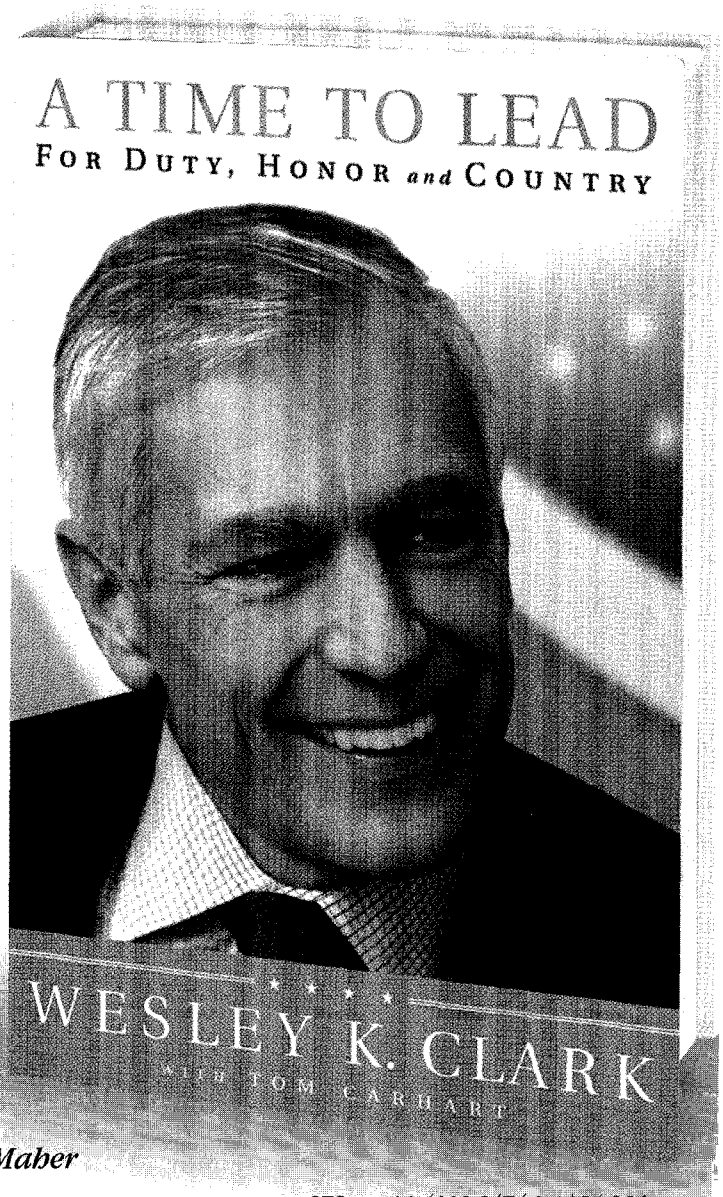
IN WAR, PEACE, AND EVERYDAY LIFE, SOME ARE CALLED TO LEAD



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Helms practically invented the modern conservative politics of sexuality, along with the electoral mobilization of white conservative evangelicals, starting back in the 1970s. In 1977, he seized on Anita Bryant's successful campaign to overturn a gay rights ordinance in Miami and began building a national backlash against antidiscrimination laws. As early as 1979, he was making speeches about the terrible threat of "secular humanism" to Christianity, making the wonky Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies an unlikely villain. When the AIDS epidemic emerged in the 1980s, Helms began an extended and violently worded campaign to "protect" Americans from the "perverts" whose "disgusting" habits were responsible for AIDS, while attacking efforts to find effective treatments. Most memorably, Helms single-handedly made the National Endowment of the Arts' subsidies for "obscene" and "homosexual" artwork a culture-war staple for nearly two decades.

In the Senate, Helms was best known, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, for his mastery of Senate procedures to slow down or defeat legislation and nominations he didn't like—usually against a majority of his colleagues—and to create symbolic votes representing his various causes. As Link explains, Helms's main service to the antiabortion movement over the years was his success in creating "test votes" that placed members of Congress on record for or against innocuous-sounding but corrosive amendments aimed at limiting abortion rights. Without question, the guerrilla tactics being employed today by Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell to thwart a Democratic Congress rely heavily on Helms's legislative precedents.

But Helms's abiding passion was his effort to undermine anything approaching multilateralism or diplomacy in foreign policy. His first big splash in national politics was his war on Henry Kissinger's détente policies, culminating in a platform fight at the 1976 Republican National Convention that nearly unraveled Gerald Ford's nomination. During the Carter administration and beyond, Helms employed an intrepid band of staffers who were encouraged to roam around Africa and Latin America building their own intelligence networks and sniffing out insufficient U.S. support for anticommunist insurgencies. He was one of the last to support Pinochet in Chile and the apartheid regime in South Africa, and as late as the 1990s was trying to undermine the democratically elected Chamorro government in Nicaragua for its lack of ruthlessness in purging Sandinistas. And long after the end of the cold war, Helms focused much of his energies during the Clinton administration fighting the United Nations and a variety of multilateral treaties and organizations.

Most of all, Helms spent his entire thirty years in the Senate battling the State Department's career diplomats and championing a guns-and-ideology approach to foreign policy that blended Old Right isolationist tendencies with New Right militarism and imperial arrogance.

Although Helms announced his retirement from the Senate a few weeks prior to 9/11, and left office at the end of 2002, there's not much question that he placed a large imprint on the post-9/11 Bush administration foreign policy. When Donald Rumsfeld tossed the State Department–prepared plan for postinvasion Iraq into the nearest trash can, the Helms legacy reached its apogee.

More broadly, Helms's fingerprints were all over the Bush-Rove political strategy of polarization, which achieved the kind of narrow presidential reelection victory in 2004 that characterized every Helms electoral contest (he never won more than 53 percent of the vote in North Carolina). In election after election, Helms dealt with his extremist image not by moderating his policies or appeals, but by painting his opponent as equally or even more extreme. Indeed, in his toughest race—his 1984 come-from-behind win over Jim Hunt—he eerily anticipated the 2004 "flip-flop" campaign against John Kerry, with ads that endlessly challenged Hunt with the taunt, "Where do you stand, Jim?" And as Bush and Rove did in 2004, Helms successfully suggested that his Democratic opponent's waffling disguised a leftist agenda that would not survive exposure.

It's hard to avoid the conclusion that Jesse Helms was not an outlier, but instead an avatar of a style of politics and policy that has characterized the rise and fall of the right from Reagan to George W. Bush. While those competing to succeed Bush in the GOP have learned to avoid emulation of most of Helms's out-front extremist rhetoric and some of Bush's specific mistakes, even a casual look at their policy views shows that Helms's legacy lives on, from talk about the "religion of secularism" to the bizarre suggestion that Bush has failed through insufficient conservatism at home and abroad.

Any review of a biography, of course, requires some mention of the personality of the subject himself. And Link is clearly ambivalent about Helms's character. He credits Helms for consistency (to a fault), for devotion to family and friends, for his legendary "courtliness," particularly toward women, and for his unassuming lifestyle. Link also dutifully reports the incidents that were interpreted as signs of a late-career mellowing: Helms's early-1990s split with the Congressional Club, his purge of right-wing entrepreneurs from his foreign policy staff at about the same time, and, most famously, the unlikely alliance this inveterate foreign-aid hater formed with Bono in support of a large increase for assistance to Africa, and even for AIDS relief on that continent (where most victims were not, presumably, "perverts").

But other aspects of Helms's personality cannot be ignored, particularly his venomous assault on Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy and his virulent hatred of gays and lesbians. For years, as part of his campaign against the NEA, this "courtly" Christian carried around portfolios of homoerotic Mapplethorpe photos and showed them to reporters and (male) citizens with the question, "How do you like them apples?" And as late as 1995, when an old friend wrote him to recommend compassion for people like her gay son, who had died of AIDS, Helms wrote back to say, "I wish he had not played Russian roulette with his sexual activities."

All in all, I wish that Jesse Helms had not played Russian roulette with his country's politics and policies. He knew no limits to his extremism, and tutored a whole generation of conservatives in extremist strategy and tactics. His legacy is as bitter and unforgiving as his rhetoric. Professor Link is to be congratulated for thoroughly bringing back so many bad but important memories. WM

Ed Kilgore is managing editor of the *Democratic Strategist*.

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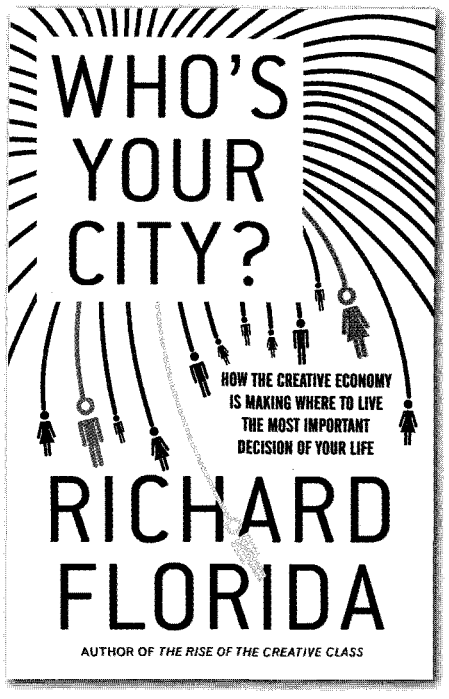
But Can You Get a Decent Bagel There?



Who's Your City?: How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life

by Richard Florida
Basic Books, 256 pp.

The anxiety of choosing a city to live in

By Doron Taussig

Back in August 2005, the *New York Times* published a story that caused a minor hullabaloo in Philadelphia. Noting that many onetime New Yorkers were relocating to their cheaper, more manageable neighbor city to the south, the Big Apple's paper of record declared a trend, and dubbed Philadelphia "the sixth borough."

Once you got past the condescension and the logical problems with the label (if you wanted to start adding boroughs to New York City, wouldn't Philly be, like, seventeenth on the list?), the story had a lot to offer. It documented a phenomenon that affected the life of two cities, and correctly identified its causes as cost of living and convenience.

The part that struck me the most, though, was a throwaway line in the middle, about new Philadelphians who were reluctant to give up their New York phone numbers, because they couldn't admit that they'd really left. See, I myself am a native New Yorker who relocated to Philly, and I worry a fair amount about my decision to be here. I worry, for example, that I'm far from my parents and friends, and that, while I really like the City of Brotherly Love, I'll always feel more at home listening to old men argue about the Mets in a bagel store. Other urbanites, I'm sure, have their own concerns. Probably there are New Yorkers just scraping by who wonder whether they could have a higher quality of life in a smaller metropolis like Philly. The well-to-do in the Big Apple may ponder whether they'd prefer the weather in, say, San Francisco, and Bay Area residents, I can only imagine, are racked with guilt over their decision to live in a veritable resort town. For those of us fortunate enough to have a choice—because of youth, education, resources, or whatever—the question of *where* has become a difficult one. We have a wealth of options, a wide range of possible outcomes, and, unlike with, say, career choices or love lives, no archive of platitudes to guide us.

Enter Richard Florida, guru of all things young and urban. If you know Florida, it's probably from his smash book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, in which he argues that, in an era when people's creative faculties are the real means of production, cities grow by attracting creative people; to do that, he says, they need to be hip, open, and gay friendly. The book won this magazine's Political Book Award, became a national best seller, and changed the way cities thought about economic development. (This infuriated people on both sides of the political spectrum: conservatives, because it gave municipalities a development tool beyond slashing business taxes; and liberals, because they believed Florida was cheerleading inequality.) It also made Florida a sort of academic pop star. Cities around the world brought him in as a consultant, and his speaking engagements were accompanied by local newspaper articles referencing the middle-aged author's hip attire and numerous handlers.

Now, in a new book called *Who's Your City?: How the Creative Economy Is Making Where You Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life*, Florida attempts to expand his brand. His previous work was about cities, and how they could best attract creative professionals; this one is for professionals, and how they can best choose a home. The

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book is a hybrid between the academic form that gave Florida his start and the professional-advice-giver style he's since adopted; in other words, it's Florida's attempt to help his "creative class" answer the question: *Where?*

Like any self-help book, *Who's Your City?* begins by telling its readers that they're missing a great opportunity. Because creative skills have become so valuable, Florida says, creative workers are able to sell their services in a variety of places, and have become highly mobile. But, he laments, most of us fail to think very much or very hard about where we choose to live.

I think this is an oversimplification, but let's come back to that, because after making this last point Florida goes on to do something we should all applaud: he disagrees with Thomas Friedman. Florida believes people fail to think about place because we're told that place no longer matters. And Friedman, author of the best-selling book *The World Is Flat*, is a chief proponent of the idea that technology has made geography obsolete. Florida objects. The world is not flat, he tells us. It's "spiky."

Though the "flat" metaphor never made sense in the first place—as Matt Taibbi memorably observed in the *New York Press*, the significance of Columbus's discovery was that in a round world, the farthest-apart points are closer together—and though Florida, apparently eager to coin a phrase, uses the word "spiky" about 60,000 times, the image works. Creative, mobile workers tend to cluster, Florida says, and, using a number of different indicators including economic output and patents granted, he shows that the great bulk of global economic activity is conducted in a modest number of "mega-regions," or, yes, "spikes." The creative economy is not making the world flat; it is dividing it into prosperous peaks and impoverished valleys.

Where we fall on this landscape, then, is an important consideration. The way Florida sees it, people really belong to one of two groups: the "mobile," who hop agilely from peak to peak, or the "rooted," who are trapped in place far below them. It's not clear where poor migrants fit in this paradigm, but that doesn't really stop us, because after briefly discussing the global class dynamic, Florida pretty much leaves everyone but his educated, mobile readers behind. The book, after all, is about us, and the choice that our mobility permits—an important choice, Florida says, because (and this is one of his key points) the place we choose will have a major impact on our happiness. Citing a study he conducted with the Gallup Organization called the Place and Happiness Survey, Florida reports that, even controlling for demographic factors, satisfaction with one's place is highly correlated with overall happiness. "Most people operate under the assumption that as long as our work remains enjoyable and challenging, our finances in order, and our family and friends loving and supportive, we will be happy," he writes. "What my team and I found is that there is most definitely a fourth bucket from which we all seem to derive happiness: our place."

Much of the rest of the book is dedicated to understanding this relationship between location and happiness. Sometimes, the questions Florida raises are interesting: he looks at what characteristics we appreciate in a hometown, for instance, and finds the answer to be basic services, aesthetics, security, and culture. I also liked a chapter on the geographic clustering of personality, a subject about which Florida collaborated on a study. The Sunbelt, it turns out, really is populated by "agreeable" people; "neurotics" do tend to gather in New York. (Of course, there's a big chicken-and-egg question here: Do people bring their personalities to a place, or does a place bestow upon residents a common personality? But Florida acknowledges this, and the quantification of a region's personality is pretty cool in any case.)

Other times, however, Florida seems a bit, shall we say, *overeager*. Consider, for example, that, according to the Place and Happiness Survey, "the majority of us are quite happy with where we have chosen to live"—a fact Florida reveals without asking whether that's because people can *adapt* to different places, in which case maybe the question of where to live really isn't so important after all. The author, you get the feeling, is a bit too committed to seeing his theories reflected in his results.

The other thing that should be said about *Who's Your City?* is that it is, quite simply, painful to read. The book opens with a thud of a story, about an appearance Florida made on the *Colbert Report*, that doesn't have much to do with anything except Florida's stardom. From there, it sputters along on lifeless anecdotes and bad jokes. (In discussing people who move to places outside their comfort zones, for instance, Florida writes, "How about Paris and Nicole—well, that's the subject of another book.") More frustrating than the poor writing, however, is Richard Florida's preoccupation with Richard Florida. It's not just that the author uses his own experience as his prime example; it's that, in so doing, he works hard to promote a certain self-image. We read, repeatedly, about Florida's working-class upbringing; we read obviously manufactured quotes from his parents: "'Richard,' [my father] would say, 'You don't have to end up in a factory like me, working hard and punching a clock for modest pay.'" (Really? He said "modest"?) The whole thing brings

The creative economy is not making the world flat; it is dividing it into prosperous peaks and impoverished valleys. People really belong to one of two groups: the "mobile," who hop agilely from peak to peak, or the "rooted," who are trapped in place far below them.

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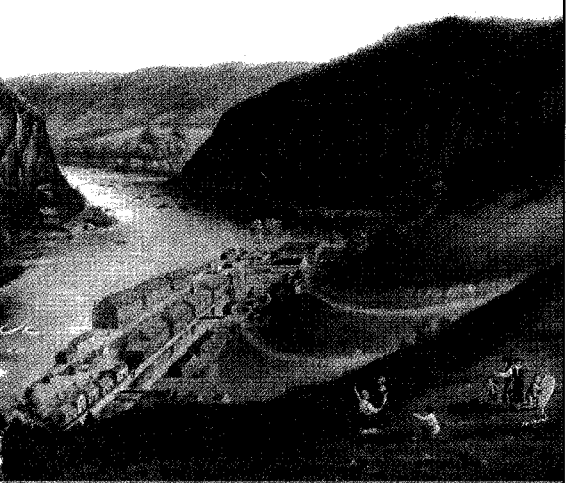
THE POTOMAC CANAL
George Washington and the Waterway West · Robert J. Kapsch



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back cringe-inducing memories of John Kerry's "band of brothers" or John Edwards's incessant use of the phrase "mill worker." (It also reminded me of another Stephen Colbert moment, from his *Daily Show* days, in which Colbert satirized the Democratic primary by claiming to be the son of a "turd miner" and the grandson of a "goat-ball licker.")

But that's not what we came here to talk about. We came to talk about whether I should move.

In the final third of the book, after making the case that our happiness is tied up in our location—which, for all the flaws with the author's delivery, is a perfectly reasonable idea—Florida finally takes off his academic hat and gives us some advice. The cornerstone of this effort is a new set of rankings of the most desirable metropolitan regions in the country. "Best Places to Live" ratings are fairly ubiquitous, of course, and, somewhat oddly, Florida fails to differentiate his by stating explicitly whether they're for the "creative class" or are otherwise unique, aside from their urban focus. Still, his approach seems, to my amateur eyes, fairly sophisticated. He generates a different list for people in each of five "life stages"—college grads, young professionals, families with children, empty nesters, and retirees—and takes different factors into consideration for each (the availability of doctors for the older group, for instance). I was pleased to see that he also factors in cost—something I didn't expect, since Florida, at times, seems oblivious to the fact that many members of the creative class have economic limitations.

Florida says he's created an online tool into which you can punch your information and get a list of the cities that are right for you. But it's not available yet, so the rankings are all I have to work with. According to those, as a person between the age of twenty and twenty-nine with economic limitations, I would be happiest in San Francisco; Washington, D.C.; New York City; Austin; or Minneapolis. If I wanted to live in a smaller city, I might try Bridgeport, Connecticut; Madison, Wisconsin; or Huntsville, Alabama.

This is fair enough. But I'm not going to just pick up and move to Huntsville. For one thing, my wife and I don't want to be more than a couple of hours from our families. For another, I need to be somewhere with as healthy a media market as possible. So I'm pretty much still stuck deciding between New York and Philly. What I really need is some advice about how to make this decision.

Florida, to his credit, dedicates his final chapter to offering such advice. He takes us through a ten-step process, from asking preliminary questions—How much does climate matter to you? Do you prefer big cities or small communities?—to examining factors like schools and crime statistics, to considering what he calls "aesthetics" and "open-ness." In Step 10, he reminds us that this is about more than taking a measurement. "Say you're thinking about moving to Santa Fe. Do you know anyone who lives there?" he writes. "Talk to them."

Are you seeing what I'm seeing here? That these steps are fairly obvious?

Florida declares, at the start of his final chapter, that "few of us spend any time strategically considering ... *where* to live." When he makes this point early on, it seems like a minor overstatement, or a conflation with the Friedmanian idea that, from a geopolitical standpoint, place doesn't matter anymore. But as you finish the book, you realize that Florida thinks people don't ponder the pros and cons of location *at all*—that we just follow jobs from place to place, never realizing we might like one locale more than another. That's ridiculous; we don't need to be told to think about location; we need to be told how to think about it *better*. I, for example, would like to know whether the satisfaction of feeling at home in a bagel store outweighs a 50 percent drop in commuting time.

It could be, of course, that these kinds of questions are just too subjective for any advice to be universally helpful. But if that's the case, then Florida's book just boils down to another mildly useful, demographically specific Best Places to Live list.

And so it does. WM

Doron Taussig is an editor at the *Philadelphia City Paper.*

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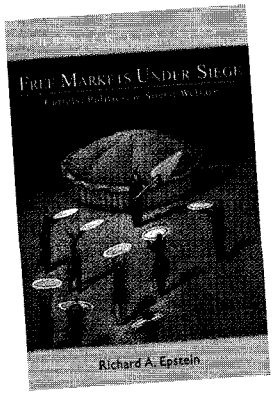

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